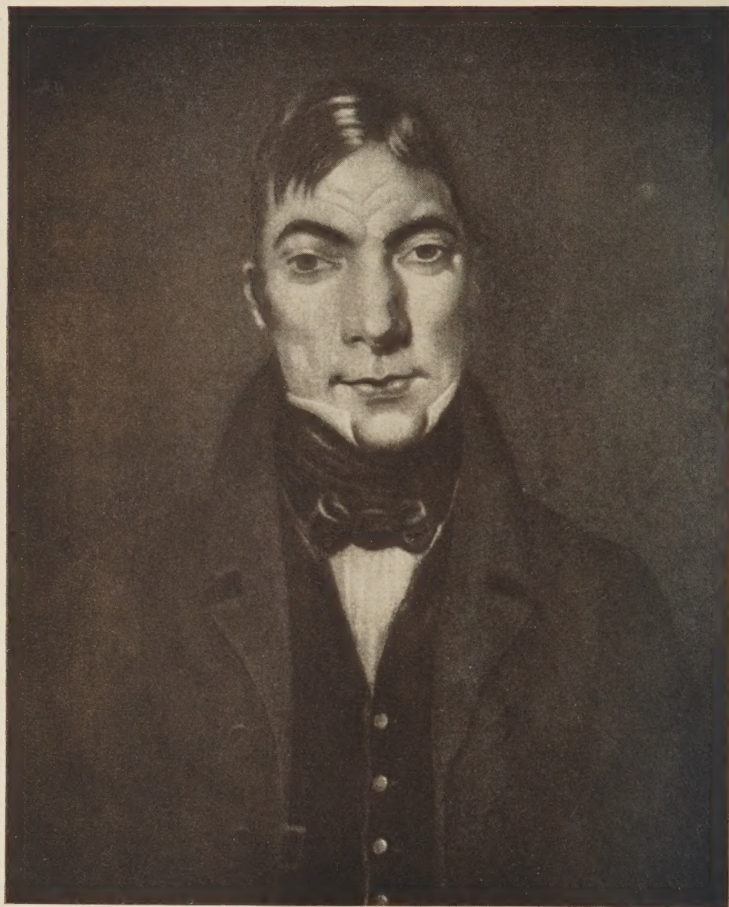


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IT IS OF ALL TRUTHS THE MOST IMPORTANT THAT THE CHARACTER OF MAN
IS FORMED *FOR* AND NOT *BY* HIM.

Robert Owen.

From an early mezzotint portrait by an unknown artist

ROBERT OWEN

A BIOGRAPHY ❦ ❦

By FRANK PODMORE

WITH FORTY-SIX ILLUSTRATIONS
AND FACSIMILES.



D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
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ROBERT OWEN
A BOOK BY
BY FRANK THORNTON

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PREFACE

ROBERT OWEN died in 1858. Up to January, 1905, four biographies of him, and four only, had appeared, all in English—the last having been written more than twenty years ago.¹ When, in 1901, I formed the intention of adding another to the list, I was moved less by a sense of the inadequacy of the work of my predecessors, than by my own desire to treat of so congenial a theme. In a word, I made up my mind, as I supposed, to write because I wanted to write. But a subsequent series of coincidences has led me to question whether in following my own pleasure I was not the unconscious instrument of larger forces, and the impulse which I held at the time to be the spontaneous outcome of my own volition part of a wider movement in the world of thought, the existence of which I had scarcely suspected.

¹ *Robert Owen and his Social Philosophy*, by W. L. Sargant, 1860.
Robert Owen . . . the Founder of Socialism in England, by A. J. Booth, M.A., 1869.

Life of Robert Owen, Philadelphia, 1866 (published anonymously, but since acknowledged to be by F. A. Packard).

The Life, Times and Labours of Robert Owen, by Lloyd Jones, first edition (posthumous), 1889. Lloyd Jones died in 1886.

There is also a small pamphlet, *Life and Last Days of Robert Owen*, by G. J. Holyoake, 1859.

For, a few months after I had definitely formulated my own project, I learnt that another Englishman, who subsequently withdrew in my favour, was entertaining the same idea. Again, in the course of 1903, whilst my own work was scarcely begun, I made the acquaintance successively of a German lady, Fraülein Simon, and a Frenchman, M. Edouard Dolléans, who had conceived, about the same time as myself, the idea of writing a biography of the great Socialist.¹ In the previous year, 1902, appeared the first adequate account—for which the world had been content to wait for three-quarters of a century—of Owen's great Communal Experiment at New Harmony.² And finally, when the present book was already far advanced, a collection of letters written to or by Owen, which had been lost sight of for more than a generation, was found in a lumber-room and forwarded to the late G. J. Holyoake, by whom it was handed on for safe keeping to the Co-operative Union at Manchester. The timely discovery of this correspondence, of which I have made such use as my opportunities permitted, furnishes a retrospective justification—if further justification is needed—for the project formed five years ago.³

¹ Both these lives have already appeared. *Robert Owen: sein Leben und seine Bedeutung für die Gegenwart*, by Helene Simon. Jena, 1905. *Robert Owen*, by Edouard Dolléans. Paris, 1905.

² *The New Harmony Communities*, by George Browning Lockwood.

³ All the letters quoted in the following pages, when no other source is indicated, are in this Collection, which is not yet catalogued. The letters date from the year 1823, and include a few written to or by Owen on his tour in Ireland in that year. From the fact that the letters begin just where the Autobiography leaves off, it seems probable that

Amongst those who have assisted me to obtain information, and have lent or given valuable books and documents, I have to render special thanks to Mr. T. Parry Jones, of Newtown—the place of Owen's birth and of his death—to Mr. William George Black, Professor Earl Barnes, Mr. J. C. Gray, Secretary of the Co-operative Union, Mr. A. Dransfield, of the Working-Men's Institute and Public Library, New Harmony, Indiana, Mrs. Templeton, Mr. William Tebb, Mr. C. Godfrey Gumpel, Mr. C. S. Loch and the Council of the Charity Organisation Society. To other friends I render cordial acknowledgment for help given.

the letters form part of the material collected by Owen in his life-time for the purpose of his Autobiography. I have found only two letters dated before 1823 (both of which are referred to in the following pages), and these evidently owe their preservation to the date, which is very indistinct in each case, having been misread. The Collection includes a bundle containing several hundred letters written by Owen during the last seven or eight years of his life to his personal friend, attendant and factotum, James Rigby. Most of the letters, some 3,000 in all, are docketed by Rigby, but in a few cases the docket is in the handwriting of William Pare.

F. P.

March, 1906.

*This work is republished by arrangement
with the Trustees of the Will of the late Sara Hall*

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ROBERT OWEN

CHAPTER I

BOYHOOD

OF Robert Owen's early life our only, but sufficient, record is the autobiography which he published in 1857. Apart from the descriptions of what he felt and thought as a child—his speculations on the formation of character, his weighing in the balance the several religions of the world, in all which we cannot but suppose that the old man of eighty-seven read back into the primitive, fluent consciousness of infancy the reflections and judgments of maturer years—there is no reason to doubt the substantial accuracy of the narrative, and, in any case, we have no other or better authority. I propose, therefore, as it would be useless to refer the reader to a book which has long been out of print and is now difficult to obtain, to quote from the autobiography, making only a few transpositions for the sake of clearness, and such omissions as are rendered necessary by the limitations of space. In the chapter which follows, therefore, Robert Owen speaks for himself. For the sake of convenience I will omit the usual signs

of quotation and omission, and when I find it necessary to summarise or interpolate an editorial comment, square brackets [] will indicate the change of person.

As it appears in the family great Bible, I was born in Newtown, Montgomeryshire, North Wales, on the 14th of May, 1771, and was baptized on the 12th of June following.

My father was Robert Owen. He was born in Welshpool, and was brought up to be a saddler, and probably an ironmonger also, as these two trades were at that period often united in the small towns on the borders of Wales. He married into the family of Williams, a numerous family, who were in my childhood among the most respectable farmers around Newtown.

I think my mother (who was deemed beautiful, as I was informed, when she was married) was the eldest sister of the family, and, for her class, superior in mind and manner.

I suppose that on their marriage they settled in Newtown—my father taking up his own calling as a saddler and ironmonger. He was also postmaster as long as he lived.¹ He had the general management of the parish affairs, being better acquainted, as it appears, with its finances and business than any other party in the township. I never thought of enquiring of him for any particulars respecting his father or mother,

¹ Prior to 1791, the postmaster of Newtown was a sub-deputy to the postmaster of Bristol. When, in the latter year, the office at Newtown was made a head post office, the salary of the postmaster was fixed at £10 a year. It may perhaps be inferred that the appointment of sub-deputy-postmaster conferred more prestige than profit on the holder.

both being dead before I was born; and owing to the then very bad state of the roads there was comparatively little communication for young persons between Newtown and Welshpool. Newtown was at this period a very small market town, not containing more than one thousand inhabitants—a neat, clean, beautifully situated country village, rather than a town, with the ordinary trades, but no manufactures except a very few flannel-looms.

[Newtown is still a very small market town, having now about six thousand inhabitants, and its staple industry is still the manufacture of woollen stuffs. But whereas in Owen's boyhood spinning and weaving were alike done by hand, there are now four or five mills with machinery driven by steam, the two largest having about a hundred looms each. The town is beautifully situated in the upper valley of the Severn, surrounded on all sides by finely wooded hills.

The house in which the elder Owen carried on his trade as a saddler and in which Robert Owen was born stands in the main street of the town—a fairly broad street which goes in a straight line over a stone bridge (built since Owen's time) across the Severn, and then for some distance still in a straight line up the steep side of the opposite hill. The Owens' house has now been thrown into the adjoining house, and a passage-way has been cut through the ground-floor rooms, but the old divisions of the walls are still to be seen. The house is almost incredibly small, the rooms low and dark. All the timber—the staircase, the balustrade, the beams and floors—is of solid oak; the flooring is made up of pieces of oak—not planks, but odd pieces

fitted together in a clumsy mosaic; the doors are of oak with deep-cut panels, and still bear the marks of the broad chisel which was used, instead of a plane, to smooth the surface.

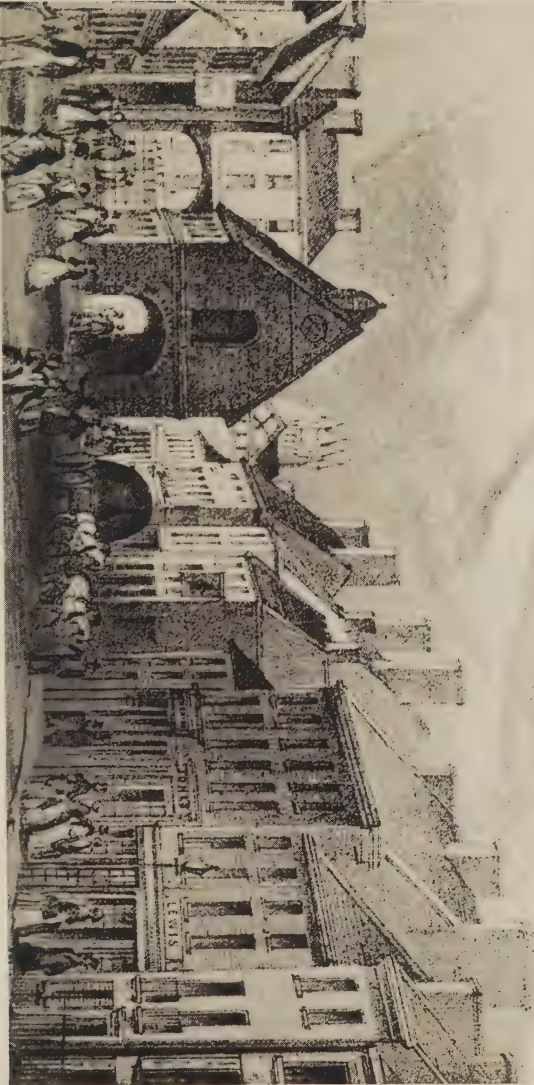
Just to the north of the Owens' house there stood in the middle of the street the old Town Hall, a narrow two-storied building with a high-pitched roof, the ground-floor having a kind of tunnel driven through it lengthways, for the convenience of traffic. The building seems to have occupied nearly half the width of the street. It was pulled down in 1852; but Newtown still possesses several old black-timbered houses, and the general aspect of the town has probably altered less than most English towns in the last hundred and thirty years.]

I was the youngest but one of a family of seven, two of whom died young. The survivors, William, Anne, and John,¹ were older, and Richard was younger than myself. The principal adjacent estate was Newtown Hall, at the period of my birth and for a few years afterwards the property and residence of Sir John Powell Price,² Bart.; and my first recollection is of Sir John opening a glass door which divided my father's shop from the dwelling part of the house, and setting a bird flying towards us, saying there was something for the children's amusement, and they must take care of it.

This must have been shortly before he left his estate, I suppose from being in debt, for it soon passed into other hands. My next recollection is being in school

¹ This brother John, as I am informed by Mr. Harold Owen, a great-great-grandson, emigrated as a young man to Canada, and appears to have remained there throughout his life. His grandson returned to this country.

² The name is more correctly spelt Pryce.



From a drawing made about 1848. Reproduced by permission of Messrs. Phillips & Son, Newtown.

NEWTOWN, MONTGOMERYSHIRE.

in apartments in the mansion of his estate,¹ and a Mr. Thickness, or some such name, was the schoolmaster. I must have been sent young to school—probably at between four and five years of age—for I cannot remember first going there. But I recollect being very anxious to be first in school and first home, and the boys had always a race from the school to the town, and, being a fast runner, I was usually at home the first, and almost always the first at school in the morning. On one occasion my haste nearly cost me my life. I used to have for my breakfast a basin of flummery, a food prepared in Wales from flour, and eaten with milk, and which is usually given to children as the Scotch use oatmeal porridge.² [Hastily swallowing his flummery one morning, he found it scalding hot, and the result was a severe and prolonged fainting fit.] In that state I remained so long, that my parents thought life was extinct. However, after a considerable period I revived; but from that day my stomach became incapable of digesting food, except the most simple and in small quantity at a time. This made me attend to the effects of different qualities of food on my changed constitution, and gave me the habit of close observation

¹ This house, a low, rambling, unpretentious building, is still standing. It is just on the outskirts of the small town, barely three hundred yards from the Owens' house. After serving as a school, it was for some time used as a woollen factory. It is now again used as a private residence.

² "Welsh flummery—Llumruwd (sour sediment), whence our English word 'flummery.' It is formed of the husks of the oatmeal roughly sifted out, soaked in water until it becomes sour, then strained and boiled, when it forms a pale brown subgelatinous mass, usually eaten with abundance of new milk." (*My Life*, etc., by A. R. Wallace, Vol. I., p. 179.)

and of continual reflection ; and I have always thought that this accident had a great influence in forming my character.

Shortly before this event I was doing something with the keyhole of a large door in a passage between my father's house and that of our next neighbour, and by some means I got one of my fingers fast in the keyhole, and in my attempt to get it out it was twisted so painfully that I fainted, and I know not how it came loose, for I was found in a swoon lying on the ground.

On another occasion my life was perilled, and I again escaped without knowing how. Newtown is situated on the banks of the river Severn, over which at that time there was a bridge that had been erected many years before, of wood.¹ It admitted of a wagon-way with a narrow footpath on each side. My father had a favourite cream-coloured mare, and her pasture-fields were on the side of this bridge opposite to where we lived. When my father required this mare, as it was a favourite of mine also, I frequently went for it to the field, and rode it home, although a young horseman, for at this period I was only six or seven years old. One day when returning from the field mounted on this mare, I was passing homeward over the bridge, but before I was half over, a wagon had made some progress from the opposite side. There was not room for me to pass without my legs coming in contact with the wheels of this wagon or with the rails of the bridge. I had not sense enough to turn back, and endeavoured to pass the wagon. I soon found that my leg was in danger

¹ This wooden bridge was replaced in 1827 by the stone structure already mentioned.

of being grazed by the wheels and I threw it over the saddle, and in consequence I fell on the opposite side, but in falling I was so alarmed lest I should drop into the river or should strike against the bridge, that I lost all recollection. How I escaped I know not, but on recovering I found myself on the footpath of the bridge, the mare standing quietly near me, and the wagon had fairly passed and I was unhurt. Since that occurrence I have always felt a more especial liking for cream-coloured horses than for any others.

In schools in these small towns it was considered a good education if one could read fluently, write a legible hand and understand the first four rules of arithmetic. And this I have reason to believe was the extent of Mr. Thickness's qualification for a schoolmaster, because when I had acquired these small rudiments of learning at the age of seven, he applied to my father for permission that I should become his assistant and "usher," as from that time I was called while I remained in school. And thenceforward my schooling was to be repaid by my ushership. As I remained at school about two years longer, those two years were lost to me, except that I thus early acquired the habit of teaching others what I knew.

But at this period I was fond of and had a strong passion for reading everything which fell in my way. As I was known to and knew every family in the town, I had the libraries of the clergyman, physician, and lawyer—the learned men of the town—thrown open to me, with permission to take home any volume which I liked, and I made full use of the liberty given to me.

Among the books which I selected at this period

were *Robinson Crusoe*, *Philip Quarle*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Paradise Lost*, *Harvey's Meditations Among the Tombs*, *Young's Night Thoughts*, *Richardson's* and all other standard novels. I believed every word of them to be true and was therefore deeply interested, and I generally finished a volume daily. Then I read Cook's and all the circumnavigators' voyages, the history of the world, —Rollin's *Ancient History*—and all the lives I could meet with of the philosophers and great men.

At this period, probably when I was between eight and nine years of age, three maiden ladies became intimate in our family, and they were Methodists. They took a great fancy to me, and gave me many of their books to read. As I was religiously inclined,¹ they were very desirous to convert me to their peculiar faith. I read and studied the books they gave me with great attention; but as I read religious works of all parties, I became surprised, first at the opposition between the different sects of Christians; afterwards at the deadly hatred between the Jews, Christians, Mahomedans, Hindoos, Chinese, etc., etc., and between these and what they called Pagans and Infidels. The study of these contending faiths, and their deadly hatred to each other, began to create doubts in my mind respecting the truth of any one of these divisions. While studying

¹ We have some independent testimony to Robert Owen's religious character in childhood. A nephew—Robert Owen Davies—wrote to the *St. James's Chronicle*, December, 1826, to vindicate his uncle from the charge of Atheism. "As a boy," he writes, "Robert Owen slept alone, because his elder brother was always beating him for saying his prayers upon his knees at the bedside: and afterwards when a youth he was ever remarked for his strict attention to his religious duties." (Quoted in letter to Mrs. Stewart, May 6, 1830, Manchester Collection.)



Photo by permission of Mr. John Owen, Newtown, Montgomeryshire.

THE OLD HALL, NEWTOWN, WHERE ROBERT OWEN WENT TO SCHOOL.

and thinking with great earnestness upon these subjects, I wrote three sermons, and I was called the little parson. These sermons I kept until I met with Sterne's works, in which I found among his sermons three so much like them in idea and turn of mind, that it occurred to me as I read them that I should be considered a plagiarist, and without thought, as I could not bear any such suspicion, I hastily threw them into the fire ; which I often after regretted, as I should like to know now how I then thought and expressed myself on such subjects. But certain it is that my reading religious works combined with my other readings, compelled me to feel strongly at ten years of age that there must be something fundamentally wrong in all religions, as they had been taught up to that period.

[As already said] I could not eat and drink as others of my age, and I was thus compelled to live in some respects the life of a hermit as regards temperance. I entered, however, into the amusements of those of my own standing, and followed the games played by boys at that period in that part of the country—such as marbles, hand and foot ball, etc. I also attended the dancing-school for some time, and in all these games and exercises I excelled, not only those of my own age, but those two or three years older, and I was so active that I was the best runner and leaper, both as to height and distance, in the school. I attempted also to learn music, and to play upon the clarionet, and during my noviciate, as my father's house was in the middle of the principal street, I fear I must have annoyed all the neighbourhood, for my "God save the King" and similar tunes were heard almost all over the town. But

I do not recollect that any formal complaint was ever made. I was too much of a favourite with the whole town for my benefit.

About this period, a young gentleman, a Mr. James Donne, who was studying for the Church, either at Oxford or at Cambridge, came upon a visit to Newtown during a vacation, and I became his every-day companion. He was then about nineteen, and I was between eight and nine. The country around Newtown is, I believe, generally considered to be interesting and beautiful, and Mr. Donne and myself, while he remained upon his visit, rambled about the woods and lanes and higher grounds to examine the scenery in all directions. These excursions with a man of his cultivated taste and superior conversation awakened in me a sense of pleasure which I ever afterwards experienced, in observing nature in its every variety—a pleasure which, as I advanced in years, continued and increased. The friendship thus commenced strengthened with our years and continued to the death of Mr. Donne, who became well known and highly respected as Mr. Donne of Oswestry. We had much correspondence, and when I had aroused the thinking faculties of the civilised world by the great public meetings which I held in the City of London Tavern in 1817, I was surprised by receiving a letter from my much valued friend, Dr. Donne, to inform me that he had taken a pleasant task upon himself, which was to trace my pedigree, and had discovered that I was a regular descendant from the Princes of North Wales.¹

¹ There are several letters from Dr. Donne in the Manchester Collection. He acted as Owen's agent in forwarding remittances to Owen's sister, Mrs. Weaver.

[During the school holidays Robert Owen used to visit his relations, farmers living in the neighbourhood of Newtown. His most intimate friend appears to have been a cousin, Richard Williams, a boy just a year younger than himself.] One very hot day in hay-harvest time we felt ourselves, being over-clothed, quite overcome with heat while we sauntered from the house towards a large field where numerous haymakers were actively at work. They appeared to us, who had been doing nothing and yet were overcome with heat, to be cool and comfortable. I said, "Richard, how is this? These active workpeople are not heated, but are pleasantly cool, and do not suffer as we do from the heat. There must be some secret in this. Let us try to find it out. Let us do exactly as they do, and work with them." He willingly agreed. I was, I suppose, between nine and ten years of age, and he was between eight and nine. We observed that all the men were without their coats and waistcoats, and had their shirts open. We adopted the same practice, procured the lightest rakes and forks, for both were used occasionally, and Richard and I, unburthened of our heavy clothing, led the field for several hours, and were cooler and less fatigued than when we were idle and wasting our time. This became ever afterwards a good experience and lesson to both; for we found ourselves much more comfortable with active employment than when we were idle.

Our next neighbours were two maiden ladies of the name of Tilsley, and they kept a superior country shop for the sale of drapery and haberdashery on one side, and groceries on the other. One of these ladies changed her situation by marrying a Mr. Moore, and as he

enlarged the business so as to add a wholesale branch to their former retail trade, they required more assistance, and as I was active, it was supposed I could be useful to them, and my services were borrowed, at first on market and fair days ; and as I had been then two years in the capacity of usher, learning nothing but how to teach, Mr. Moore requested my father to permit me to be with them every day in the week, instead of, as hitherto, on their more busy days only ; and thus I was occupied for one year, but living in my own family.

Having by this period read much of other countries and other proceedings, and, with my habits of reflection and extreme temperance, not liking the habits and manners of a small country town, I began to desire a different field of action, and wished my parents to permit me to go to London. I was at this time about nine years and a half old ; and at length, although I was a great favourite at home, it was promised that when I should attain my tenth year I should be allowed to go. This promise satisfied me in the meantime, and I continued to gain knowledge of the business in which I was occupied, continuing also to read and to take lessons in dancing.

It was at those lessons that I first became conscious of the natural sympathies and dislikes or jealousies of children. I was esteemed the best dancer of my class, and at that period I was in the first class. The contest for partners among the girls was often amusing, but sometimes really distressing. The feelings of some of them, if they could not obtain the partners they liked, were so overpowering that it was afflicting to see how much they suffered. I have long thought that the minds

and feelings of young children are seldom duly considered or attended to, and that if adults would patiently encourage them to express candidly what they thought and felt, much suffering would be saved to the children, and much useful knowledge in human nature would be gained by the adults. I am now conscious there was much real suffering in that dancing-room, which, had there been more knowledge of human nature in the dancing-master and in the parents of the children, might have been avoided.

The time had now drawn near for my departure from my parental roof, and for me to undertake a journey which in the then state of the roads was thought formidable for grown persons. From Shrewsbury I was to travel alone to London, inexperienced as I then was. At that time I knew and was known to every man, woman, and child in the town, and I called upon and took my leave of every one ; and I received many a keepsake, and, from the more wealthy, presents of money. I deemed myself, at ten years of age, amply provided to seek my fortune with forty shillings—the expenses of my coach hire being paid for me.

Before proceeding to narrate my journey I may state that I was never but once corrected by my parents. This correction took place under the following circumstances, and when I was, I think, scarcely seven years old. I was always desirous to meet the wishes of both my parents, and never refused to do whatever they asked me to do. One day my mother indistinctly said something to me to which I supposed the proper answer was “no,” and in my usual way I said “no”—supposing I was meeting her wishes. Not understanding me, and

supposing that I refused her request, she immediately, and to me rather sharply—for her custom was to speak kindly to me—said “What! Won’t you?” Having said “no,” I thought if I said “yes, I will” I should be contradicting myself, and should be expressing a falsehood, and I said again “no,” but without any idea of disobeying her. If she had then patiently and calmly enquired what my thoughts and feelings were, a proper understanding would have arisen, and everything would have proceeded as usual. But my mother, not comprehending my thoughts and feelings, spoke still more sharply and angrily—for I had never previously disobeyed her, and she was no doubt greatly surprised and annoyed when I repeated that I would not. My mother never chastised any of us—this was left for my father to do, and my brothers and sisters occasionally felt a whip which was kept to maintain order among the children; but I had never previously been touched with it. My father was called in and my refusal stated. I was again asked if I would do what my mother required, and I said firmly “no,” and I then felt the whip every time after I refused when asked if I would yield and do what was required. I said “no” every time I was so asked, and at length said quietly but firmly—“You may kill me, but I will not do it”; and this decided the contest. There was no attempt ever afterwards to correct me. From my own feelings, which I well remember when a child, I am convinced that very often punishment is not only useless, but very pernicious, and injurious to the punisher and the punished.

Though alone in going to London, I was not to be alone when I arrived there. My eldest brother,

William, had been brought up by my father to his own business, and when out of his apprenticeship, and after he had subsequently worked some years with my father, he decided to go to London, when he was between twenty and thirty, and he there obtained a situation with a Mr. Reynolds, a saddler, who then lived at No. 84, High Holborn. To him I was consigned, for by this time Mr. Reynolds had died, and my brother had taken the business and had married the widow.

My father took me to Welshpool, and thence I went to take coach for London at Shrewsbury, which was then the nearest place to Newtown to which there was any public conveyance to go to London. The coach left Shrewsbury at night, and an outside place had been taken for me, with the expectation that I might travel inside during the night. The proprietor, who knew my family, was going to put me inside, when some ill-tempered man, who had discovered that I had paid only for an outside place, refused to allow me to enter. It was dark and I could not see the objector, nor discover how crowded the coach might be;—for coaches then carried six inside. I was glad afterwards that I did not know who this man was.

My father had written respecting me to his friend, a Mr. Heptinstall, of No. 6, Ludgate Hill, who was a large dealer in lace, foreign and British; and Mr. Moore had written in my favour to Mr. Tilsley, of No. 100, Newgate Street, who then kept what was deemed a large draper's shop. This was in 1781. I think I had been on this visit to my brother nearly six weeks, when Mr. Heptinstall procured me a situation with a Mr. James McGuffog, of whom he spoke highly as

carrying on a large business, for a provincial town, in Stamford, Lincolnshire. The terms offered to me were for three years—the first without pay, the second with a salary of eight pounds, and the third with ten pounds, and with board, lodging and washing in the house. These terms I accepted, and being well found with clothes to serve me more than a year, I from that period, ten years of age, maintained myself without ever applying to my parents for any additional aid.

I left my brother's house in London, and arrived at Stamford, where I found Mr. McGuffog's establishment all that was stated, and his house respectable and comfortable. This was a most fortunate introduction for me into active life. Mr. James McGuffog was a Scotchman, thoroughly honest, and a good man of business—very methodical, kind, and liberal, and much respected by his neighbours and customers, and also, for his punctuality and good sense, by those from whom he purchased his goods for sale; and I was fortunate in obtaining such a man for my first master. He told me that he had commenced life in Scotland with half a crown, laid it out in the purchase of some things for sale, and hawked them in a basket. That by degrees he changed his basket for a pack, with which he travelled the country, acquiring knowledge through experience, and increasing his stock until he got, first a horse, and then a horse and covered van. He made his regular rounds among customers of the first respectability in Lincolnshire and the adjoining counties, until he was requested by the nobility and principal families and farmers around Stamford to open an establishment there for the sale of the best and finest articles of female

wear, for which, for some time in his travelling capacity, he had become celebrated. When I came to his house he had been some years established in it, and was beginning to be so independent that he made all his purchases with ready money and was becoming wealthy. He had married a daughter of a well-doing middle-class person, and they appeared to live on very good terms with each other, and both were industrious, always attending to their business, yet respectable at all times in their persons, and altogether superior as retail tradespeople, being quite the aristocracy of that class, without its usual weak vanities. They had at this time an assistant of the name of Sloan, about thirty-five years of age, a bachelor; and also a youth about my own age, nephew to McGuffog.

Here I was at once installed as a member of the family, and during my stay with them I was treated more like their own child than as a stranger come from afar. I was by Mr. McGuffog carefully initiated into the routine of the business, and instructed in its detail, so as to accustom me to great order and accuracy. The business was carried on under a well-considered system, which in its results was very successful. I suppose I was considered industrious and attentive to my instructions, for I was seldom found fault with or unpleasantly spoken to by either Mr. or Mrs. McGuffog—the latter often attending to the business.

The articles dealt in were of the best, finest, and most choice qualities that could be procured from all the markets of the world; for many of the customers of the establishment were amongst the highest nobility in the kingdom, and often six or seven carriages be-

longing to them were at the same time in attendance at the premises. Mr. McGuffog's shop had become a kind of general rendezvous of the higher-class nobility. I had thus an opportunity of noticing the manners of these parties, and of studying their characters, when they were under the least restraint. I thus also became familiar with the finest fabrics of a great variety of manufactures, many of which required great delicacy in handling and care in keeping from being injured. These circumstances, trivial as they may appear, were of essential service to me in after life, when I became a manufacturer and commercial man upon a large scale; for they prepared me in some measure for the future intercourse I had with what is called the great world.

Mr. McGuffog had a well-selected library, which I freely used; for our chief business was from ten in the morning to four in the afternoon, and while I remained in Stamford I read upon the average about five hours a day.

One of the entrances to Burleigh Park was near the town; and in summer, and as long as the weather permitted, my chief pleasure was to go early into the park to walk, read, think, and study in those noble avenues which were then numerous in it. Very often in the midst of summer I was thus in the park from between three and four in the morning until eight, and again in the evening from six or seven until nearly dark. I had transcribed many of Seneca's moral precepts into a book which I kept in my pocket. To ponder over them in the park was one of my pleasurable occupations; and in this park, which I made my study,

I read many volumes of the most useful works I could obtain.

Mr. McGuffog was of the Church of Scotland, Mrs. McGuffog of the Church of England, and they agreed to go in the morning to the service of the one, and in the afternoon to that of the other, and they always took me with them. I listened to the contending sermons, for they were often, and indeed most generally, either in reference to their own sectarian notions, or in opposition to some of the opposing sects. But during the four years I remained with Mr. and Mrs. McGuffog, I never knew a religious difference between them.

I was all this time endeavouring to find out *the true religion*, and was greatly puzzled for some time by finding all of every sect over the world, of which I read, or of which I heard from the pulpits, claim each for themselves to be in possession of *the true religion*. I studied and studied, and carefully compared one with another, for I was very religiously inclined, and desired most anxiously to be in the right way. But the more I heard, read, and reflected, the more I became dissatisfied with Christian, Jew, Mahomedan, Hindoo, Chinese, and Pagan. I began seriously to study the foundation of all of them, and to ascertain on what principle they were based. Before my investigations were concluded, I was satisfied that one and all had emanated from the same source, and their varieties from the same false imaginations of our early ancestors—imaginations formed when men were ignorant of their own nature, were devoid of experience, and were governed by their random conjectures, which were almost always,

at first, like their notions of the fixedness of the earth, far from the truth.

It was with the greatest reluctance, and after long contests in my mind, that I was compelled to abandon my first and deep-rooted impressions in favour of Christianity. But being obliged to give up my faith in this sect, I was at the same time compelled to reject all others, for I had discovered that all had been based on the same absurd imagination, "that each one formed his own qualities—determined his own thoughts, will, and action,—and was responsible for them to God and to his fellow-men." My own reflections compelled me to come to very different conclusions. My reason taught me that I could not have made one of my own qualities—that they were forced upon me by Nature; that my language, religion, and habits were forced upon me by Society; and that I was entirely the child of Nature and Society; that Nature gave the qualities, and Society directed them. Thus was I forced, through seeing the error of their foundation, to abandon all belief in every religion which had been taught to man. But my religious feelings were immediately replaced by the spirit of universal charity—not for a sect or a party, or for a country or a colour, but for the human race, and with a real and ardent desire to do them good.

Before, however, I had advanced so far in knowledge, while I was yet a Christian, and was impressed with the sacredness of the Christian Sabbath, it seemed to me that in Stamford it was much disregarded, and it came into my head, at the age of twelve or thirteen, to write upon the subject to Mr. Pitt, who was then Prime Minister. In my letter to him, I stated the desecration

which was going forward in Stamford, and expressed a hope that Government would adopt some measures to enforce a better observance of the Sabbath.

[To the delight of the youthful Puritan and the amazement of Mr. and Mrs. McGuffog, a Government proclamation, enjoining a stricter observance of the Sabbath, was published a few days later. At the age of fourteen or fifteen the boy returned to London, and then paid a brief visit to his parents at Newtown.]

After some time of this relaxation from business it was necessary for me to seek for a new situation, and through Mr. McGuffog's recommendation I procured one with Messrs. Flint and Palmer, an old-established house on old London Bridge, Borough side, overlooking the Thames. My previous habits prepared me to take an efficient part in the retail division of the business of serving. I was lodged and boarded in the house and had a salary of twenty-five pounds a year, and I thought myself rich and independent. To the assistants in this busy establishment the duties were very onerous. They were up and had breakfasted and were dressed to receive customers in the shop at eight o'clock—and dressing then was no slight affair. Boy as I was then, I had to wait my turn for the hairdresser to powder and pomatum and curl my hair, for I had two large curls on each side, and a stiff pigtail, and until all this was very nicely and systematically done, no one could think of appearing before a customer. Between eight and nine the shop began to fill with purchasers, and their number increased until it was crowded to excess, although a large apartment, and this continued until late in the evening; usually until ten, or half-past ten, during all the spring

months. Dinner and tea were hastily taken—two or three, sometimes only one, escaping at a time to take what he or she could the most easily swallow, and returning to take the places of others who were serving. The only regular meals at this season were our breakfast, except on Sundays, on which days a good dinner was always provided, and was much enjoyed. But when the purchasers left at ten or half-past ten, before the shop could be quite clear a new part of the business was to be commenced. The articles dealt in as haberdashery were innumerable, and these when exposed to the customers were tossed and tumbled and unfolded in the utmost confusion and disorder, and there was no time or space to put anything right and in order during the day. This was a work to be performed with closed doors after the customers had been shut out at eleven o'clock; and it was often two o'clock in the morning before the goods in the shop had been put in order and replaced to be ready for the next day's similar proceedings. Frequently at two o'clock in the morning, after being actively engaged on foot all day from eight o'clock in the [previous] morning, I have scarcely been able with the aid of the banisters to go upstairs to bed. And then I had but about five hours for sleep.

This hurried work and slavery of every day in the week appeared to me more than my constitution could support for a continuance, and before the spring trade had terminated I had applied to my friend to look out for another situation for me. The spring trade ceased, and the business gradually became less onerous. We could take our meals with some comfort, and retire to rest between eleven and twelve, and by comparison



Photo by permission of Mr. John Owen, Newtown, Montgomeryshire.

1

ROBERT OWEN'S BIRTH- AND DEATH-PLACE, NEWTOWN, NORTH WALES.

2

No. 1—The house in which he was born, May 14, 1771.

No. 2—The house in which he died, Nov. 17, 1858. This house, now the „Bears Head“ Inn, has been rebuilt since Owen's death.

this became an easy life. I was kindly treated. The youngest Palmer, a good and fine youth, took a great liking to me, and we became great friends, and spent our Sundays in some excursion always together, and as the less busy season advanced we began to enjoy our leisure hours in out-of-door exercise or in reading. His habits were good and his manners very pleasing. With this change I was becoming every day more and more reconciled to this new mode of life. I was beginning to enjoy it, having forgotten that I had requested my friend to look out for another situation, when, really to my regret, I learned from my brother that my former friend Mr. Heptinstall, of No. 6, Ludgate Hill, had obtained the offer of a very good situation for me, from a Mr. Satterfield, who carried on a wholesale and retail establishment in Manchester, that it was a first-rate house, and that he offered me, besides board, lodging and washing, in his house, *forty pounds a year*.

[With his removal to Manchester, apparently in his seventeenth year, the chapter of Owen's boyhood may be said to have closed. He now began to take up a man's work, and his later life belongs to history.]

CHAPTER II

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

BEFORE proceeding to trace Owen's life and work in Manchester, it will be well to take a wider survey and consider the conditions of the time into which he had been born and the manner of world he was now about to enter.

The closing decades of the eighteenth century witnessed the final stages in the supersession of the mediæval system of industry, and the establishment of the present era. The essential differences between the two eras from the economic standpoint can be summarised in a few sentences. In mediæval England the prices of commodities, the wages of labour, and the rent, where rent existed, of land were fixed by custom, and the changes enforced from century to century by changing economic conditions were regulated and as far as possible retarded by legal enactments, and by the restrictions imposed by guilds and immemorial usage. Profit was not recognised as an element in production, and the minds of devout Christians were still exercised as to the lawfulness of exacting interest. Agriculture for the most part was carried on under the communal system which prevailed at an early stage in the history of all Aryan peoples, and the several functions of landlord, capitalist, and labourer were still in the main un-

differentiated. The yeoman freeholder tilled his own land : in the handicrafts the apprentice and the journeyman rose in the natural course of events to the position of a master.

But the revolution, though in its last stages it progressed with startling rapidity, had been for centuries in preparation. Gradually Parliament had learnt the futility of regulating wages and prices by statute : the communal system of land tenure had been disappearing step by step ; one industry after another had developed to a point at which it became possible for a single employer to organise and profit by the labours of many workmen. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the revolution began to quicken its pace. The fifty years from 1710 to 1760 were years of good harvests, a slowly increasing population, and unexampled prosperity. The rapid growth of our Colonies created a demand for our manufactures—a demand which our steadily growing mastery of the sea, hampered though internal communication still remained through bad roads, enabled us in a large measure to supply. England exported during this period not only manufactured goods, but a considerable quantity of corn ; and the agricultural labourer was better off than he had been for nearly two hundred years. But his status was already changing for the worse. At the close of the preceding century there had been in England some 180,000 yeomen—small freeholders tilling their own land—a large proportion of the land of England was still cultivated by villages on the communal system ; there were millions of acres of waste land, on which the poor could graze their beasts and even build their cottages. But through-

out the eighteenth century the nobility and the country squires betook themselves to enlarging and improving their estates, partly to have and to hold the political power which went with the land, partly to maintain their position in face of the growing wealth of the merchant princes of London and the west of England. As a means to this end the small freeholders were gradually expropriated, until towards the close of the century the class had become almost extinct. Commons and waste lands were enclosed under successive Acts of Parliament, and the old three-field system of the village commune—wasteful and antiquated as it was—yielded to improved methods of agriculture, which permitted of a better rotation of crops, scientific manuring of the ground, and improved breeds of sheep and cattle. These various measures, whilst largely increasing the productiveness of the soil and the general wealth of the country, had the effect of driving out the small freeholder, and ultimately of making the labourer poorer and much more dependent than before.

But it was in the handicrafts, and especially in the textile industries, that the progress of the century wrought most change. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the staple industry of the country, as it had been for some hundreds of years, was the manufacture of woollen goods. The raw material was for the most part supplied from native sources. The instruments of the manufacture were the spinning-wheel and the handloom; and even if this primitive machinery had admitted of consolidation in large factories, the only available motive power was to be found in the waterwheel and the horse-mill. Moreover, in the early years of the century, “commercial

enterprise was exceedingly limited. Owing to the bad state of the roads, and the entire absence of inland navigation, goods could only be conveyed on pack-horses, with a gang of which the Manchester chapmen used occasionally to make circuits to the principal towns, and sell their goods to the shopkeeper—bringing back with them sheep's wool, which was disposed of to the makers of worsted yarn at Manchester, or to the clothiers of Rochdale, Saddleworth and the West Riding of Yorkshire.”¹ Baines's description applies chiefly to the north of England, in which the means of internal communication remained in a very backward state until, in the latter part of the eighteenth century, Brindley constructed his famous canals and Metcalf showed how roads could be made. In the south and west no doubt foreign trade and internal communications were much more advanced; and here we find the beginnings of a capitalist industry. But for the most part the functions of capitalist, employer, and workmen were still undifferentiated.

Spinning and weaving were very largely carried on by the poor in their own homes, and often were an adjunct to a small farm or croft. There is a well-known passage in Defoe's *Tour* which describes this cottage or yeoman industry, as he witnessed it in the neighbourhood of Halifax about 1725.

Not only, he writes, were the houses thick at the bottoms of the valleys, “but the sides of the hills were spread with Houses, and that very thick: for the Land being divided into small Enclosures, that is to say, from two Acres to six or seven Acres each, seldom more; every three or four Pieces of Land had a House

¹ Baines's *History of the Cotton Manufacture*, p. 105.

belonging to it. . . . Hardly a House standing out of a Speaking distance from another. We could see that almost at every house there was a Tenter, and almost on every Tenter a piece of cloth or Kersie or Shalloon, for they are the three Articles of that country's Labour. At every considerable House was a Manufactory. As every clothier must keep a horse, perhaps two, to fetch home his Wool and his Provisions from the Market, to carry his Yarn to the Spinners, his manufacture to a fulling Mill, and when finished, to the Market to be sold, and the like ; so every Manufacturer generally, keeps a cow or two or more for his Family, and this employs the two, or three or four pieces of enclosed Land about his House, for they scarce sow Corn enough for their Cocks and Hens. Among the Manufacturers' Houses are likewise scattered an infinite number of Cottages or small Dwellings, in which dwell the Workmen which are employed, the Women and Children of whom are always busy carding, Spinning &c., so that no Hands being unemployed, all can gain their Bread, even from the youngest to the ancient : hardly anything above four years old, but its Hands are sufficient to its self." ¹

¹ Defoe's *Tour* (edition of 1727), Vol. iii., pp. 97-101. These remote moorland districts round Halifax were behind many parts of England in their industrial development even in the third decade of the eighteenth century, and they have remained behind the world until quite recent times. Mr. F. H. Williamson, writing to me in January, 1903, gives the following description of this part of Yorkshire, from his personal knowledge :—

"It is only quite recently that the handloom has disappeared from parts of the West Riding. I can quite well remember about 1880-85 seeing a few old men who still carried on their weaving business in their own homes ; and the click of the loom was not infrequently heard from the roadside cottages out on the moors.

"I can remember quite a number of old men who had been handloom

William Radcliffe, the joint inventor of a machine for dressing the warp, gives a minute and highly interesting description of rural life in the more populous parish of Mellor, about 14 miles from Manchester, in the period just before the introduction of the new machinery: "In the year 1770, the land in our township was occupied by between fifty to sixty farmers; rents, to the best of my recollection, did not exceed 10s. per statute acre; and out of these fifty or sixty farmers, there were only six or seven who raised their rents directly from the produce of their farms; all the rest got their rent partly in some branch of trade, such as spinning and weaving woollen, linen or cotton. The cottagers were employed entirely in this manner, except for a few weeks in the harvest. Being one of those cottagers and intimately acquainted with all the rest, as well as every farmer, I am better able to relate particularly how the change from the old system of hand labour to the new one of machinery operated in

weavers when they were younger, but had been compelled to give it up in later life. These old men were frequently both farmers and weavers; they had a little plot of freehold land where they would keep a cow or two and perhaps a donkey which they used to carry their cloth or materials—when they did not carry them on their backs, as they often did—to market. The warp and weft were, I believe, bought in the neighbouring towns, Huddersfield or Halifax, but all the operations were conducted at home; the warp was put on the loom, the weft was wound on bobbins for the shuttles by the women (I think a treadle winding-machine, somewhat similar to the spinning-wheel, was used) and woven by the men. The piece was "tenting" on tenting-frames in the fields, and then taken off to the towns to be disposed of.

"I never saw a young man at the handloom. The older men who had used it were a much finer race than the present generation who work in large factories—tall, hardy, of great physical strength and endurance, and very long-lived. Eighty was not at all an uncommon age; and whole families could be found of which all the members attained that age."

raising the price of land in the subdivision I am speaking of. Cottage rents at that time, with convenient loom-shop, and a small garden attached, were from one and a half to two guineas per annum. The father of a family would earn from eight shillings to half-a-guinea at his loom; and his sons, if he had one, two or three alongside of him, six or eight shillings each per week; but the great sheet-anchor of all cottages and small farms, was the labour attached to the hand-wheel; and when it is considered that it required six to eight hands to prepare and spin yarn, of any of the three materials I have mentioned, sufficient for the consumption of one weaver,—this shows clearly the inexhaustible source there was for labour for every person from the age of seven to eighty years (who retained their sight and could move their hands) to earn their bread, say one to three shillings per week, without going to the parish.”¹

The Yorkshire weavers no doubt used wool grown in the neighbourhood, and the farmers of Mellor were largely dependent upon similar supplies. But where the raw material was imported from afar, or where the proximity of a seaport or other circumstances offered greater facilities for trade, we find that the industry tended to concentrate itself in a particular locality, and that frequently the raw material would be supplied and the whole operation directed by capitalist employers. There were tailors in London at the end of the seventeenth century who employed scores of workmen, engaging and dismissing them as the work required,

¹ *Origin of Power Loom Weaving*, by William Radcliffe (1828), pp. 59-60.

much as in recent times;¹ the capitalist clothiers of Wiltshire, Somerset, Gloucester and Devon, who employed mostly Spanish wool and exported largely to foreign markets, supplied the raw material to the spinners and weavers, and disposed of the manufactured product, earning large fortunes for themselves in the process. Hollinworth mentions three famous clothiers, at Kendal, Halifax, and Manchester respectively, so early as 1520, each of whom had in his employment a large number of carders, spinners, weavers, and so on.² In Arthur Young's time there was a large silk-mill, worked by water power, on the banks of the Derwent.³ The same writer found in 1776 a linen factory at Ballymote, co. Sligo, employing ninety looms, which had been established by Lord Shelburne some twenty years previously.⁴

Again, the manufacture of cotton from the very beginning was concentrated chiefly in Manchester and its neighbourhood. *Both* the fibres of which cotton cloth was at this time composed—for until about 1770 linen thread was always used for the warp—were imported, the linen chiefly from Ireland, the cotton from the West Indies, and it is probable that the geographical situation of Manchester was mainly responsible for the concentration of the industry in this spot. Further, it seems certain that, as in the west of England, the industry was at least partly organised on a capitalist basis. Thus Dr. Aikin, in his *Description of Manchester*,⁵ writes:

¹ Webb's *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 26.

² Quoted by Baines, *History of Cotton Manufacture*, p. 91.

³ See *The Modern Factory System*, by W. Cooke Taylor, p. 71.

⁴ *Tour in Ireland*, Reprint of 1892, Vol. I., p. 223.

⁵ *Description of the Country Round Manchester*, 1795, p. 158.

“Fustians were manufactured about Bolton, Leigh, and the places adjacent : but Bolton was the principal market for them, where they were bought in the grey by the Manchester chapman, who finished and sold them in the country.

“The Manchester traders went regularly on market-days to buy pieces of fustian of the weaver ; each weaver then procuring yarn or cotton as he could, which subjected the trade to great inconvenience. To remedy this, some of the chapmen furnished warps and wool to the weavers, and employed persons on commission to put out warps to the weavers. They also encouraged weavers to fetch them from Manchester, and, by prompt payment and good usage, endeavoured to secure good workmanship.”

But the factory system, as we understand it, had not yet begun. Even when the employer supplied the raw material and sold the finished cloth, the workers for the most part provided their own spinning-wheels and looms and worked in their own homes. In the earlier decades of the eighteenth century it was only in the manufacture of silk that the nature of the machinery used was such as to admit of the economical employment of any power except that of human limbs. For indeed, up to the middle of the century, the machinery employed throughout Europe in spinning and weaving had scarcely advanced since the time of the Pharoahs. The distaff had yielded to the spinning-wheel ; but the spinster still laboriously wrought a single thread, with such slowness that one loom, even a handloom, required, as we have seen, the services of six or eight spinning-wheels to keep it constantly supplied. The handloom

itself, an improvement, no doubt, on the rude frame stretched by the Hindoo between two palm-trees, was still worked by the weaver's feet; and, until the invention, in 1738, of the fly-shuttle, the thread was still passed through the warp by the weaver's hand. Again, the manufacturers of Manchester could not compete in fineness with the fabrics of India, wrought by still ruder machinery, nor make a thread of cotton strong enough to be used for the warp in the process of weaving.

But from 1738 onwards there came, in rapid succession, a number of inventions, each aiming at substituting mechanical devices for the slow and uncertain operations of human fingers in spinning. John Wyatt, Thomas Hughs, James Hargreaves, Richard Arkwright, and Samuel Crompton are the chief names on this roll of honour. Hargreaves invented the spinning-jenny (the name was given out of compliment to his wife), Arkwright the water-frame, as it was called, from the motive power originally employed to work it. Both inventions were actually brought into use for commercial purposes between 1760 and 1770; and a few years later Crompton combined the characteristic merits of the inventions of his two predecessors in a new machine, hence called the "mule."

The work done by the fingers in spinning consisted in at once stretching and twisting the fine fibres of the cotton. The problem which the great inventors set before them was how to enable machinery to do the work hitherto done by human fingers; to do it faster; to stretch the fibres to a much higher degree of fineness; and to twist the thread to a much greater hardness. Robert Dale Owen gives an admirable description

of the working of Arkwright's machine. "In the earliest days the Hindoo, holding in his left hand a staff around one end of which was wrapped a portion of the vegetable fleece, drew out with forefinger and thumb, moist and delicate, and then deftly twisted, the thread. After tens of centuries Arkwright substituted for human forefinger and thumb two sets of rollers revolving with unequal velocity, the lower roller of each pair fluted longitudinally, the upper covered with leather. This gave them a sufficient hold of the cotton as it passed between them. The space between the two pairs of rollers was made somewhat greater than the length of the cotton fibre. The back pair which received the cotton in the form of a band or ribbon, revolved much more slowly than the front pair, which delivered it. The effect was that, at the moment when the cotton ribbon was released from the grasp of the back pair of rollers, the front pair, because of their greater velocity, exerted upon it a slight steady pull.

"The result of this was twofold, first, to straighten out the fibres left crooked or doubled in the carding; secondly to elongate the line of cotton presented to the action of these rollers, and thus diminish its calibre. In other words, the front pair of rollers drew the cotton out, as the finger and thumb pulling on the contents of the distaff had done, but with far more rapidity and regularity than human fingers ever attained. This process was repeated through three machines, and the cotton band was thus reduced in thickness by successive attenuations. . . . By the front rollers of the last of these machines, usually called a *throstle frame*, the cotton cord was drawn out to the calibre or fineness of the thread to be pro-

duced; and underneath these rollers were stationary spindles (revolving with much greater velocity than the spindle of the cottager's wheel had done) on which the hard-twisted thread was finally wound."¹

In Crompton's mule moving, instead of stationary, spindles were employed, and the final process of stretching and twisting the fibres was effected by the spindles as they receded from the rollers. Yarn of much finer quality was produced by the mule than it had been found possible to produce with Arkwright's machine.

It was obvious that the relations between spinning and weaving were now in danger of being reversed. The mule and the water-frame could produce far more cotton twist than the slow handloom could hope to overtake. A Kentish clergyman named Cartwright, realising this danger, set himself to work in 1785 to invent a loom which could be worked by mechanical power. He took out a patent in the following year; and between that date and the end of the century successive improvements were made by various inventors. It was not, however, until early in the nineteenth century that the power-loom came into general use.

Hitherto, as already said, the only motive-powers available for working machinery, whether for spinning or for weaving, were the labour of men or animals and the waterwheel. But for the last thirty years of the eighteenth century James Watt, protected by a special statutory monopoly, laboured incessantly to perfect his discovery of the steam-engine; and in the early years

¹ *Threading my Way* (An Autobiography), by Robert Dale Owen, pp. 10-12. London, 1874.

of the nineteenth century steam began to displace water as the motive-power in mills and factories.

At the time when Robert Owen came to Manchester, however, the power-loom and the steam-engine were still in their infancy. The spinning machinery employed in the great mills which were springing up on every side in Manchester was worked by water-power. Manufacturers on a smaller scale drove the spinning jennies and mules by hand or foot. Its nearness to a great port had originally made Lancashire the chief seat of the cotton industry: the abundance of water-power enabled the county still to retain its pre-eminence in this manufacture, to which the mechanical inventions described now gave an enormous impetus. The following figures will show that Owen came upon the scene just at the time of the most rapid increase, due mainly to the annulling of Arkwright's patent in 1785.

COTTON IMPORTED INTO GREAT BRITAIN FROM 1701-1800.

| | LBS. |
|---|------------|
| In 1701 the amount of cotton imported was ... | 1,985,868 |
| " 1764 " " " " ... | 3,870,392 |
| " 1776-80 (yearly average) " " " " ... | 6,766,613 |
| " 1790 " " " " ... | 31,447,605 |
| " 1800 " " " " ... | 56,010,732 |

BRITISH COTTONS EXPORTED FROM 1701-1800.

Official Value.

| | £ |
|---|------------------------|
| In 1701 the cottons exported were valued at ... | 23,253 |
| " 1764 " " " " ... | 200,354 |
| " 1780 " " " " ... | 355,060 |
| " 1790 " " " " ... | 1,662,369 |
| " 1800 " " " " ... | 5,406,501 ¹ |

In the space of ten years, from 1780 to 1790, the

¹ These figures are quoted from Baines's *History of the Cotton Manufacture*, p. 215, where they are stated to have been supplied by the Custom House.

amount of raw cotton imported, and the value of the manufactured cottons exported from this country had increased in about the same proportion, viz. nearly fivefold. At the end of the next decade the imports had again nearly doubled, whilst the exports had increased more than threefold in value. This enormous increase in the volume of the work done was necessarily accompanied by a large, though not of course a proportionate, increase in the number of the workers. There were no census returns in the eighteenth century, and it is difficult to find trustworthy figures showing the growth of population. But Dr. Aikin in the work already quoted gives, presumably from official sources, tables of the number of births and deaths in Manchester at successive periods, which afford some measure of the enormous growth of the population at this time :—

BILLS OF MORTALITY FOR MANCHESTER.

| YEAR. | BIRTHS. | | | | DEATHS. |
|-------|---------|-----|-------|-----|---------|
| 1700 | ... | ... | 231 | ... | 229 |
| 1760 | ... | ... | 793 | ... | 818 |
| 1770 | ... | ... | 1,050 | ... | 988 |
| 1780 | ... | ... | 1,566 | ... | 993 |
| 1790 | ... | ... | 2,756 | ... | 1,940 |

These figures, it will be seen, tell the same tale as the statistics of imports and exports already quoted. Between 1780 and 1790 the population had probably doubled itself.¹ The rush to the great cotton centres

¹ Sir S. Walpole in his *History of England from 1815* (Vol. I., p. 89) gives the following figures of the population of Manchester at different periods :—

| | | | | | |
|------|------------------------|-----|-----|---|----------------|
| 1724 | 2,400 families ... | ... | ... | = | 12,000 persons |
| 1757 | Manchester and Salford | ... | ... | | 20,000 " |
| 1774 | Manchester alone | ... | ... | | 41,032 " |
| 1801 | " " | ... | ... | | 84,020 " |

must have been like the rush to a goldfield in more recent times, but on a much more extended scale, for all alike, the old, men and women in their prime, and young children, could take part in this race for wealth. And, as will presently be shown, the young children bore a disproportionate part of the burden. Again, the influx comprised all classes. Those who had money and organising capacity to invest, and those whose only capital was the ability of their hands, alike flocked into Manchester and the surrounding districts. The numbers were recruited no doubt largely from the labourers, the yeomen and small farmers who had been thrust off the land as a consequence of wholesale enclosures and other changes described in the earlier part of this chapter.

William Radcliffe, from whom I have already quoted, gives a vivid description of the nature of the revolution in the textile industry, in so far as it affected the domestic manufacturers in the closing decades of the eighteenth century: "From the year 1770 to 1788, a complete change had gradually been effected in the spinning of yarns; that of wool had disappeared altogether, and that of linen was also nearly gone; cotton, cotton, cotton was become the almost universal material for employment; the hand-wheels were all thrown into lumber-rooms; the yarn was all spun on common jennies. . . . In weaving, no great alteration had taken place during these eighteen years, save the introduction of the fly-shuttle, a change in the woollen looms to fustians and calico, and the linen nearly gone, except the few fabrics in which there was a mixture of cotton. To the best of my recollection, there was

no increase of looms during this period, but rather a decrease. . . .

“The next fifteen years, viz. from 1788 to 1803, I will call the golden age of this great trade. . . . Water twist and common jenny yarns had been freely used in Bolton, etc., for some years prior to 1788; but it was the introduction of mule yarns about this time, along with the other yarns, all assimilating together and producing every description of clothing, from the finest book-muslin, lace, stocking, etc., to the heaviest fustian, that gave such a preponderating wealth through the loom. . . .

“The families in my own neighbourhood, whether as cottagers or small farmers, had supported themselves by the different occupations I have mentioned in spinning and manufacturing, as their progenitors from the earliest institutions of society had done before them. But the mule twist now coming into vogue, for the warp, as well as weft, added to the water twist and common jenny yarns, with an increasing demand for every fabric the loom could produce, put all hands in request, of every age and description. The fabrics made from wool and linen vanished, while the old loom-shops being insufficient, every lumber-room, even old barns, cart-houses, and outbuildings of any description were repaired, windows broke through the old blank walls, and all fitted up for loom-shops. This source of making room being at length exhausted, new weavers' cottages, with loom-shops, rose up in every direction; all immediately filled, and when in full work, the weekly circulation of money, as the price of labour only, rose to five times the amount ever before experienced in this sub-division,

every family bringing home weekly forty, sixty, eighty, one hundred, or even one hundred and twenty shillings per week.”¹

But the spinning-jenny, the water-frame and the mule cost far more to purchase than the old cottage wheel which they had displaced, and under the new conditions the cotton industry depended wholly on foreign countries for the supply of its raw material, and largely on foreign markets for the sale of its finished products. Both the cost of the new machinery and the conditions attending production for external markets favoured the capitalist at the expense of the individual worker. We find Robert Owen starting in 1790 as the owner of three of the new machines (Crompton's mules), and the master to that extent of three pairs of hands besides his own. And in all directions it is clear that the new industry was being organised on a large scale. Already in 1787, according to the reckoning of a contemporary pamphlet,² there were 143 cotton mills in Great Britain, of which 41 were in Lancashire and 22 in Derbyshire; and we see from Owen's account of his life in Manchester that more mills were springing up yearly in the town and its environs. Half a century later, at the time of the publication of Baines's book, the number of cotton mills in Lancashire alone was 657, and the number of operatives employed in them was estimated at more than 137,000. By that date the industrial revolution may be supposed to have been complete, and the cottage industry had practically ceased to exist except in a few moorland parishes and other remote corners of

¹ Radcliffe, *op. cit.* pp. 63-6.

² Quoted by Baines, p. 219.

England. But during Owen's sojourn in Manchester from 1788 to 1800, the two forms of production existed side by side. These twelve years represent the most interesting part of the transition period. It was not until the steam-engine and the power-loom had been perfected that the superior advantages conferred by capital and organising ability became sufficiently marked to drive the cottage manufacturer from the field.

CHAPTER III

LIFE IN MANCHESTER

IT was in 1787, apparently, that Robert Owen entered the shop of Mr. Satterfield, in St. Ann's Square, Manchester. The living, he tells us, was good, the company congenial, and the work not too hard; he was well treated, and found his income much more than sufficient for his moderate wants. In this situation he remained for two uneventful years, leaving it when eighteen years of age to take a share for himself in the great industrial hurly-burly.

At this time, 1789, Crompton's mule, the invention of which had been made public a few years previously, was rapidly displacing the spinning-jenny and the water-frame. As Crompton had neither the means nor apparently the desire to patent his great invention, it was open to all the world to make and use the new machine. A man named Jones, who sold wire bonnet-frames to Mr. Satterfield's establishment, told Owen of the new invention, and suggested that if Owen could find the small capital required, they might enter into partnership and make mules for sale. Owen obtained the loan of a hundred pounds from his brother William in London, left Mr. Satterfield's service, and set up business with Jones. They rented a large machine-shop, obtained the

necessary wood, iron, and brass on credit, and soon had forty men at work making spinning-mules. But whilst Jones supplied the knowledge requisite for working the machinery, the whole direction of the business devolved upon young Owen. "I had not the slightest knowledge of this new machinery—had never seen it at work. I was totally ignorant of what was required; but as there were so many men engaged to work for us, I knew that their wages must be paid, and that if they were not well looked after, our business must soon cease and end in our ruin. Jones knew little about book-keeping, finance matters, or the superintendence of men. I therefore undertook to keep the accounts—pay and receive all; and I was the first and last in the manufactory. I looked very wisely at the men in their different departments, although I really knew nothing. But by intensely observing everything, I maintained order and regularity throughout the establishment, which proceeded under such circumstances, far better than I anticipated." (*Autobiography*, p. 23.)

In a few months' time, however, Jones found another partner, a man who had a larger capital to dispose of, and Owen was bought out, accepting for his share of the business the promise of six mules, a reel, and a making-up machine. Thus in 1790, at the age of nineteen, Owen was left to his own resources.

It is worthy of note that whilst still in partnership with Jones, Owen had received an offer from his first master, McGuffog, that he should join him in his Stamford shop, receiving half profits in the first instance, and ultimately succeeding to the whole business. This offer, Owen writes, "I was of course

obliged to decline"—conceiving apparently that his undertaking with Jones precluded him from dissolving the partnership.

Owen now immediately hired a large building "or *factory*, as such places were beginning to be called," and engaged three men to work his *three* mules—all that he ever received out of the promised six—and thus started life on his own account as an employer of labour on a small scale. The mules could only undertake the final process in the manufacture of cotton thread: the preliminary stages of carding, drawing, and making-up the cotton into "rovings" were performed on Arkwright's machines. Owen purchased his "rovings,"—loose skeins of half-spun cotton fibre—from two young Scotchmen, McConnell and Kennedy, afterwards well known as cotton lords, at twelve shillings a pound, and sold the finished cotton yarn at twenty-two shillings a pound. His profits in the first year were no less than £300.

At this time, as already said, many wealthy capitalists were embarking on the business of cotton-spinning, and large factories were springing up on every hand. One Drinkwater, a rich fustian manufacturer, was amongst those who had recently built and equipped with machinery a large cotton mill, when his superintendent, tempted by a richer offer from the outside, suddenly left his service, and Mr. Drinkwater, himself almost wholly ignorant of the processes of cotton manufacture, was forced to advertise for a new manager: "On the Monday morning following," Owen writes, "when I entered the room where my spinning-machines were, one of the spinners said—'Mr. Lee has left Mr. Drinkwater, and he has advertised for a manager.' I merely

said, 'What will he do?' and passed on to my own occupation. But (and how such an idea could enter my head, I know not), without saying a word, I put on my hat and proceeded straight to Mr. Drinkwater's counting-house, and boy and inexperienced as I was, I asked him for the situation which he had advertised. The circumstances which now occurred made a lasting impression upon me, because they led to important future consequences. He said immediately—'You are too young'—and at that time being fresh coloured I looked younger than I was. I said 'That was an objection made to me four or five years ago, but I did not expect it would be made to me now.'—'How old are you?' 'Twenty in May this year'—was my reply. 'How often do you get drunk in the week?' (This was a common habit with almost all persons in Manchester and Lancashire at that period). 'I was never,' I said, 'drunk in my life'—blushing scarlet at this unexpected question. My answer and the manner of it made, I suppose, a favourable impression; for the next question was—'What salary do you ask?' 'Three hundred a year'—was my reply. 'What?' Mr. Drinkwater said, with some surprise, repeating the words—'Three hundred a year! I have had this morning I know not how many seeking the situation, and I do not think that all their askings together would amount to what you require.' 'I cannot be governed by what others ask,' said I, 'and I cannot take less. I am now making that sum by my own business.' 'Can you prove that to me?' 'Yes, I will show you the business and my books.' 'Then I will go with you, and let me see them,' said Mr. Drinkwater. We went to my factory. I explained the

nature of my business, opened the book, and proved my statement to his satisfaction" (p. 27).

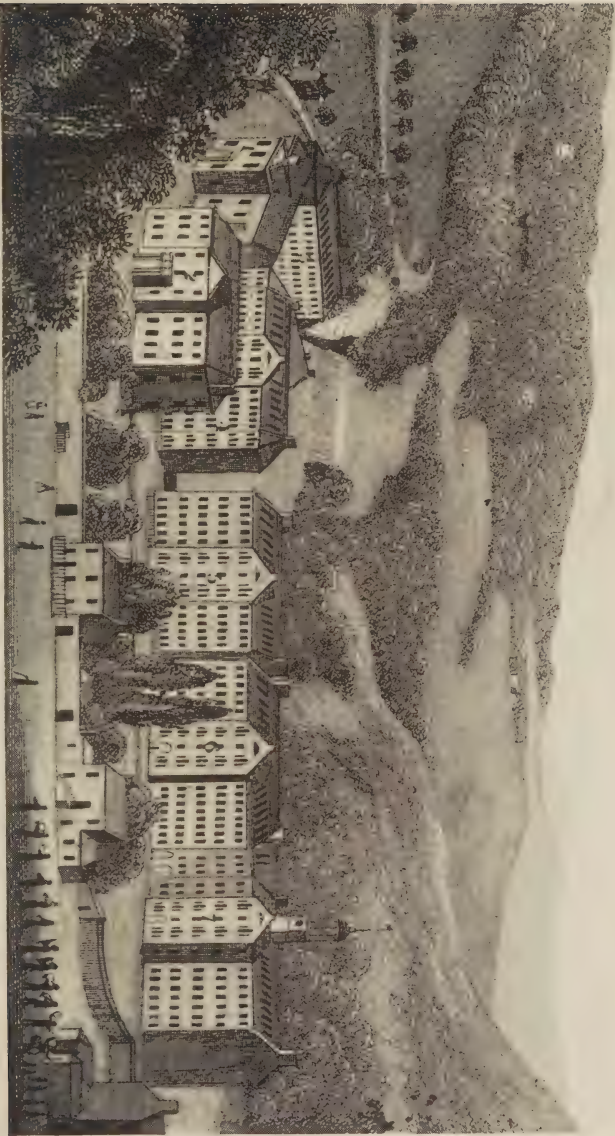
In the sequel Owen got the appointment on his own terms, and was set straightway to superintend an establishment employing five hundred workpeople, and fitted with machinery much of which was quite unfamiliar to him. For a time, he tells us, his heart failed him at the thought of the task which lay before him, and he was stupefied at his own presumption. But "there I was, to undertake this task, and no one to give me any assistance. I at once determined to do the best I could, and began to examine the outline and detail of what was in progress. I looked grave,—inspected everything very minutely,—examined the drawings and calculations of the machinery, as left by Mr. Lee, and these were of great use to me. I was with the first in the morning, and I locked up the premises at night, taking the keys with me. I continued this silent inspection and superintendence day by day for six weeks, saying merely yes or no to the questions of what was to be done or otherwise, and during that period I did not give one direct order about anything. But at the end of that time I felt myself so much master of my position, as to be ready to give directions in every department" (p. 29).

Owen's experience during the past year, and the training and knowledge of fine fabrics acquired under Mr. McGuffog, now stood him in good stead. He soon learnt to correct defects in the machinery and to improve the quality of the yarn. He learnt also to maintain order and discipline amongst the workpeople, and succeeded, as he tells us, in winning their goodwill and in establishing a salutary influence over them.

Owen's management of the factory soon proved remarkably successful. Under the management of his predecessor, Lee, the finest yarn produced averaged only one hundred and twenty hanks to the pound. Within twelve months Owen so improved the process of manufacture that his yarns ran from two hundred and fifty to three hundred hanks to the pound—a noteworthy feat in those early days—and were eagerly sought after by the best houses for weaving of muslin and other fine fabrics. His name was printed on the outside of every bundle, so that he soon became favourably known in manufacturing circles. Mr. Drinkwater seems to have been fully alive to his merits, and within a short time offered him a partnership in the business—an offer which Owen gladly accepted. Within a year or two, however, Mr. Drinkwater was led to repent his precipitancy. Mr. Oldknow, the leading manufacturer at that time of British muslins—for the finest muslins still came from the East—proposed for the hand of Mr. Drinkwater's eldest daughter, and seems at the same time to have suggested a partnership, or at least a joint interest between them in business. The deed of partnership with young Owen stood in the way of this scheme, and, at Oldknow's suggestion, Drinkwater approached Owen to ascertain on what terms he would consent to cancel the agreement, offering him any salary he might choose to name as the price of his consent. The boy's pride took fire—he destroyed the deed on the spot, and resigned at the same time his position as manager, consenting, however, to remain until Mr. Drinkwater should find some one to replace him. Owen at once received more than one offer of partnership from capitalists who

were no doubt already acquainted with the excellence of the yarn produced under his superintendence, and finally entered into an agreement with two well-known firms, Messrs. Borrodale and Atkinson of London, and Messrs. Barton of Manchester. He joined himself with them to form a new firm under the style of the Chorlton Twist Company, and left Drinkwater's service in 1794 or 1795 to take up his new duties.

As one of the managing directors of the Chorlton Twist Company he had first to superintend the building of the new factory, and to install the machinery, and, when this work was completed, to purchase the raw cotton, to supervise its manufacture, and to dispose of the manufactured product. In the course of his duties he visited not only other manufacturing towns in Lancashire, but proceeded as far north as Glasgow, where his firm had many customers. His journeys to Glasgow had important consequences. It so happened that on his first visit he met in the street a Miss Spear, sister of a business acquaintance in Manchester. Miss Spear introduced him to the friend with whom she was staying in Glasgow, a young lady of nineteen, Caroline, daughter of the well-known merchant and philanthropist, David Dale. Miss Dale gave Owen an introduction to see her father's cotton mills at New Lanark; and on Owen's return from their inspection he saw Miss Dale again, and even accompanied her and her younger sisters in their morning walk on Glasgow Green. The acquaintance thus happily begun was improved on Owen's subsequent visits to Glasgow, which his partners decided should in future be made twice a year. In those days of dear postage it was the custom for every traveller to defy



From a contemporary engraving.

1

2

4

5

6

7

No. 1—Top part a School for the Children—the under part a Public Kitchen.
No. 2—A School for the Formation of Character. Nos. 3-7—Cotton Factories.
The figures represented are the Village Band.

the Postmaster-General's monopoly, and become an unlicensed postman for the benefit of his friends. Owen in this fashion, on his next journey to the north, conveyed a letter from Miss Spear to her friend Miss Dale. He was no doubt a purely innocent go-between ; but it may be doubted whether Miss Spear was not actuated by other motives than the desire of defrauding the revenue. She had, it seems, already spoken to Owen much, and with intention, of the excellent qualities of her friend, and of the still unfettered state of her affections. This second visit, thanks to the timely introduction afforded by Miss Spear's letter, led to more walks on the banks of the Clyde, and to a further progress in intimacy. On his return from this second visit, Miss Spear again spoke much of her friend's personal excellence ; and, finally—for the young Owen, bold and self-reliant in business, was sufficiently diffident in social matters to need something stronger than a hint—ventured to tell him plainly that Miss Dale desired no other than himself for her future husband. Owen for his part was more than willing, though without this open encouragement he would scarcely, he tells us, have ventured to aspire so high. For David Dale stood well in the eyes of the world. He was a man of great wealth, the leading merchant, probably, at that time in Glasgow. He owned several factories and other business concerns in various parts of Scotland ; his cotton mills at New Lanark, founded in conjunction with Arkwright in 1783, were the first mills of any importance in Scotland ; he had opened a branch of the Royal Bank in Glasgow ; had helped to found the Chamber of Commerce in that town ; was a member of the Town Council and had

twice served as magistrate. As material evidence of his wealth and position he had built for himself, some fifteen years previously, a magnificent house—still standing—in Charlotte Street, of which the brothers Adam are the reputed architects. Moreover his religious views presented, even more than his social importance, a serious obstacle to a prospective son-in-law who already suspected, if he had not at this time openly proclaimed, that he had discovered the fallacies of all revelation.

For David Dale was religious with all the fervour and narrowness of his country and his generation. He had in early manhood seceded from the mother Church of Scotland and founded the sect of the “Old Scotch Independents.” He travelled round the country visiting and encouraging the various churches belonging to the communion, and himself acted for nearly forty years as pastor to his own special congregation in Greyfriars Wynd. To help him in his Sunday sermons he had taught himself to read the Scriptures in Hebrew and Greek. Such was the man whose daughter Owen, the freethinker, aspired to marry.¹

Upon his next visit to Scotland, nevertheless, Owen discovered his hopes to Miss Dale, who for her part explained that she could never marry without her father’s consent, but added, “If you can find the means to overcome my father’s objections it would go far to remove any I may now have to the request you have made.”

Owen had already learnt from Miss Dale that her

¹ I owe much of the information about David Dale given in the text to an essay by Mr. W. G. Black on *David Dale’s House in Charlotte Street*, printed in the papers of the Regality Club, Vol. IV., part ii. (Glasgow, 1902).

father, finding the management of so many concerns too heavy a burden, was anxious to dispose of the New Lanark Mills. This gave him the pretext he required. He called on Mr. Dale and proposed himself as a purchaser, explaining in reply to Mr. Dale's expression of astonishment at such an offer from one so young—Owen was then twenty-eight, but looked much younger than his years—that he represented men older and wealthier than himself. With Mr. Dale's permission Owen proceeded to make a detailed survey of the mills, and duly reported the matter to his partners on his return to Manchester. Two of them at once accompanied him back to Glasgow, and visited Mr. Dale. After making the necessary enquiries as to their financial position, Mr. Dale expressed himself ready to treat with them. When asked his terms, Mr. Dale professed himself at a loss to put a fair price upon the concern, as he was seldom there, and left its management entirely to his half-brother, James Dale, and a Mr. Kelley. “‘But, said he, ‘Mr. Owen knows better than I do the value of such property at this period, and I wish that he would name what he would consider a fair price between honest buyers and sellers.’ I was somewhat surprised and nonplussed at this reference to me, with all its responsible consequences, taking into consideration the position of all parties. My estimate of the establishment, from having taken only the very general inspection of it which I had had an opportunity of doing, was such, that I said, ‘It appears to me, that sixty thousand pounds, payable at the rate of three thousand a year for twenty years, would be an equitable price between both parties.’ Mr. Dale had been long known for the honest simplicity

of his character, and as such was universally trusted and respected, and as a further proof of it, to the surprise of my London and Manchester commercial partners, he replied—‘If you think so, I will accept the proposal as you have stated it, if your friends also approve of it.’ And equally to my surprise they said they were willing to accept the terms; and thus, in a few words, passed the establishment of New Lanark from Mr. Dale into the hands of the ‘New Lanark Twist Company’” (p. 53).

This transaction took place apparently in the early summer of 1799.¹

Owen proceeded at once to assume the management of the mills on behalf of his partners, and took up his quarters in the Clydesdale Hotel, Old Lanark, about a mile distant from the mills. Miss Dale and her sisters were at this time, according to their usual custom, spending the summer months in a cottage on the New Lanark estate, and they remained there for some six weeks after Owen took over the management. In the intervals of business there were, we learn, more walks and talks on the banks of the Clyde, until Mr. Dale cut short his daughters’ holiday and summoned them to return to Glasgow. Mr. Dale had previously to the purchase of the mills been informed by his daughter of Owen’s aspirations, and had given her to understand that he was not prepared to welcome as a son-in-law a “land louter,”—a stranger of whom he knew nothing. No doubt Owen’s views on religious matters had a share in influencing his decision.

¹ “Apparently,” for the dates given in the early part of Owen’s Autobiography are confused and to some extent contradictory. I infer, however, that the purchase of New Lanark took place in the same year as his marriage, and the date of that is fixed as September, 1799.

Gradually, however, his opposition weakened, a result due, it may be surmised, not more to the representations of his friends and the knowledge of his daughter's own inclinations in the matter, than to his increasing recognition of the sterling worth of Owen himself. In effect, the marriage was ultimately fixed for September 30 of this year, 1799. The marriage took place, Scotch fashion, in Mr. Dale's house in Charlotte Street.

"When we were all met on the morning of our marriage, waiting for the ceremony to commence, Mr. Dale was there to give his daughter to me, and the youngest sisters of Miss Dale for her bridesmaids. Mr. Balfour [the officiating clergyman] requested Miss Dale and me to stand up, and asked each of us if we were willing to take the other for husband or wife, and each simply nodding assent, he said without one word more—'Then you are married, and you may sit down'—and the ceremony was all over.

"I observed to Mr. Balfour, that it was indeed a short ceremony. He said, 'It is usually longer. I generally explain to the young persons their duties in the marriage state, and often give them a long exhortation. But I could not presume to do this with Mr. Dale's children whilst he lived and was present'" (p. 55).

The brief ceremony over, the young couple straightway posted "over very bad roads" to Manchester. Owen had for some two years before his marriage been living in a house called "Greenheys." The house had been built and sumptuously fitted up—the doors of Honduras mahogany imported for the purpose, and the windows of plate glass—for a wealthy merchant who died before he could occupy it. Owen and a friend took the house,

which had large gardens and pleasure-grounds attached, and divided it into two separate dwellings. Owen's bachelor establishment consisted of an elderly couple, who took care of the house, the garden, and the stable. "One of my habits," he writes, "at that period was peculiar. The old housekeeper came always after breakfast to know what I would have for dinner. My reply was 'an apple dumpling'—which she made in great perfection—'and anything else you like'; and this practice was uniform as long as I remained unmarried. My attention was devoted to business and study, and I could not be troubled to think about the details of eating and drinking."

To this house Owen brought his bride. But on the way he essayed a small mystification. "We had to pass in sight of a small low building erected by the well-known Mr. Henry for the manufacture of his concentrated essence of vinegar, and I pointed it out as soon as in sight, there being no other building near, as our future residence—and wished to know from my new wife what she thought of it. She evidently did not expect to find that I lived in a house with that common appearance, and she said she thought the house I had described to her was different. The old servant was, I perceived, disappointed that her young mistress was to be no better accommodated. After we had passed it they perceived I had not been serious in describing my residence, and we soon drove into the grounds of Greenheys, and entering into the house through a part well contrived and neatly arranged as a greenhouse, and the interior being well constructed, furnished, and nicely arranged, both my wife and her

servant were uncommonly well pleased. And here we passed our honeymoon" (p. 56).

But their sojourn at Greenheys was of the briefest. It was found that the two managers, originally appointed by Mr. Dale, who had been left in charge of the New Lanark Mills, were incapable of conducting the business to the satisfaction of the new proprietors, and at the request of his partners Owen went with his young wife back to Scotland, and entered upon the government of New Lanark, in January, 1800. With this change of scene a new period of Owen's life opens, which will form the subject of a later chapter.

Before closing the account of Owen's life in Manchester, it will be profitable to glance briefly at the social side of his activities. Of society in the ordinary sense, indeed, he saw but little—much less, probably, than most of his contemporaries in age and equals in wealth and standing. He was, as he tells us, much absorbed at this period in his business, and in study. In later life he claimed to have read in his youth and early manhood at least four hours a day on an average for twenty years.¹ Moreover he was shy, ignorant of the manners and requirements of society, and painfully conscious of his own deficiencies in these respects. But of society of another kind he had no lack. There was at this time in Manchester a Unitarian College,² under the presidency of Dr. Baines.

"At this period John Dalton, the Quaker, afterwards the celebrated Dr. Dalton, the philosopher, and a Mr.

¹ First Discourse delivered at Washington in 1825 (*New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. II., p. 225).

² The original of Manchester College, Oxford.

Winstanley, both intimate friends of mine, were assistants in this college under Dr. Baines; and in their room we often met in the evenings, and had much and frequent interesting discussion upon religion, morals, and other similar subjects, as well as upon the late discoveries in chemistry and other sciences—and here Dalton first broached his then undefined atomic theory. We began to think ourselves philosophers. Occasionally we admitted a friend or two to join our circle, but this was considered a favour. At this period Coleridge was studying at one of the universities, and was then considered a genius and eloquent. He solicited permission to join our party, that he might meet me in discussion, as I was the one who opposed the religious prejudices of all sects, though always in a friendly and kind manner, having now imbibed the spirit of charity and kindness for my opponents, which was forced upon me by my knowledge of the true formation of character by nature and society. . . . These friendly meetings and discussions with my friends Dalton and Winstanley were continued until they attracted the attention of the principal, Dr. Baines, who became afraid that I should convert his assistants from his orthodoxy, and our meetings were required to be less frequent in the college. They were, however, continued elsewhere, and I acquired the name, from some of the parties who attended these meetings, of ‘the reasoning-machine’—because they said I made man a mere reasoning-machine, made to be so by nature and society” (pp. 35, 36).

One of the leading men in Manchester at the end of the eighteenth century was Dr. Thomas Percival,

a Fellow of the Royal Society, a physician in active practice, and a man of keen intelligence and wide sympathies, profoundly interested in the various social and economic problems which were at that time forcing themselves upon the attention of thoughtful men. Amongst his published works are essays on the principles and limits of taxation ; on the growth of the population of Manchester ; on improved methods for recording bills of mortality, etc. As will be seen in the next chapter, Percival's sympathies had been specially directed to the monstrous evils attending the aggregation of large numbers of workers, especially of children, for long hours in close, ill-ventilated factories ; and from 1795 onwards he took a prominent part in calling public attention to the matter, and in insisting upon the need for interference by the State to secure the regulation of the hours of factory labour and the enforcement of proper sanitary conditions. In 1781 Percival, with one or two others, had founded the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society. The aim of the Society, which had grown out of a series of informal meetings of a few friends, was the reading and discussion of papers on various subjects. The range of its discussions was extremely wide, and embraced practically the whole field of knowledge. But at this period its interest lay mainly in the direction of physics, chemistry, geology, and the natural sciences generally. Percival was its president. Amongst its honorary members were numbered Sir Joseph Banks, Alexander Volta, Erasmus Darwin, Joseph Priestley, Arthur Young, and several bishops. The most prominent contributors, judging from the five volumes of selected papers published between 1785 and

1802, were Percival himself, Dr. Ferriar, author of *An Essay towards a Theory of Apparitions*, John Dalton,¹ Beddoes, Priestley, and one or two others.

Into this Society, which included, it will be seen, many men of the highest distinction in science and philosophy, young Owen was elected on November 1, 1793, when he was only in his twenty-third year; his last recorded attendance was on December 21, 1798. During the period of his membership he read four papers at the Society's meetings, viz. on November 29, 1793, *Remarks on the Improvement of the Cotton Trade*; on December 27, 1793, *An Essay on the Utility of Learning*; on March 13, 1795, *Thoughts on the Connection between Universal Happiness and Practical Mechanics*: and on January 13, 1797, *On the Origin of Opinions with a View to the Improvement of the Social Virtues*.²

None of Owen's papers were included amongst the essays selected for publication in the volumes already referred to; nor indeed is it at all probable that they possessed anything of permanent value either in form or matter. He thus describes the origin of the first paper: "Upon one occasion, at the sitting of the Society, the subject of cotton was introduced, on one of the nights when the President was in the chair."³ I had never

¹ Owen's name appears as one of the proposers of Dalton in April, 1794.

² I owe these details to the courtesy of Mr. Charles Leigh, sometime Secretary of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, which is still in existence.

³ The date was apparently the 4th October, 1793, when a paper is recorded to have been read by Dr. Matthew Guthrie, *On the Nature and Cultivation of Persian Cotton*. The minutes show that Owen was present as a visitor on this occasion, and was proposed for membership by Dr. Percival, Dr. Bardsley, Mr. Henry, and Mr. Harvey. Owen's own paper on cotton followed not, as stated by him, at the next meeting, but some seven weeks later.



From an engraving after a drawing by Matilda Heming, published Dec. 1, 1823.

ROBERT OWEN.

spoken in the Society, nor ever heard my own voice in public, nor had I the slightest desire ever to hear it. I was too diffident and sensitive to feel any such inclination; but upon this occasion, to my surprise and great confusion, Dr. Percival said, 'I see a young friend present who I am sure can, if he will, give us some valuable information upon the subject. I mean Mr. Owen, so well known for his knowledge in fine-cotton spinning.' I blushed, and stammered out some few incoherent sentences, and felt quite annoyed at my ignorance and awkwardness being thus exposed. Had it not been for this incident, it is probable I should never have attempted to speak in public. I was conscious I knew more of the kinds, qualities, and history of this material than any of those who spoke this evening on the subject. This impression induced me to attempt to write a paper for the Society upon this subject, and it was read and discussed at the following meeting of the Society."

The second paper, if we may judge from its title, was a mere schoolboy's essay. In the titles of the two later papers, however, we see indications that Owen's thoughts were already beginning to work on the lines which in his maturer life developed into his characteristic system of philosophy. But however crude his own performances may have been, there can be little doubt that the experience gained in the Literary and Philosophical Society was of much value to Owen in later life. It was his first introduction to educated society; and apart from the general intellectual stimulus supplied by familiar intercourse with men of learning and distinction, his association with Dr. Percival, who was occupied at this

very time with his investigations into the condition of the factories and the wrongs of those who worked in them, can hardly have failed to influence the young Owen, and may even have determined the bent of his whole future life and work.¹

One other episode of Owen's life in Manchester must be chronicled. For some months in 1794 he was a lodger at 8, Brazen Nose Street, in the same house with Robert Fulton, the celebrated engineer. Fulton had been for some years studying painting under West in London, but at this time had forsaken pictorial art for engineering, and had just patented a device, a double inclined plane, which was intended to supersede the use of locks on canals. He was also engaged in perfecting the invention of a dredging-machine, or mechanical "navvy," for which also he intended to take out Letters Patent. But the perfecting and patenting of his inventions required more money than he possessed, and Owen some time in 1794 found it necessary to assist him with a loan. Later in the same year more money, it would seem, was required, and in December, 1794, a formal deed of agreement was drawn up, under which, in consideration of an immediate advance of £65, and further loans amounting ultimately to a maximum of £400, Owen was to be admitted into partnership with Fulton, and to share in the profits from his inventions. In the following March, however, the partnership was dissolved by mutual consent ;

¹ In 1796 there was founded in Manchester, mainly through the efforts of Dr. Percival, the Manchester Board of Health, the main object of which was to devise remedies for the evils incident to factory employment. On the Committee, besides physicians and magistrates, appeared the names of several well-known cotton-spinners, including Robert Owen himself and two of his first partners, John Atkinson and John Barton.

but Owen advanced some more money, making the actual loan about £170.

The next two or three years Fulton seems to have spent chiefly in London or Paris, writing at intervals to Owen. Some time in 1797 he repaid a first instalment—£60—of the loan; but Owen never heard from him again. The relations between them seem to have been marked throughout by the greatest cordiality, and Owen in his old age refers to the episode with pleasure and with some pride in having been able to help one who had done so much for the advancement of the world.

CHAPTER IV

THE FACTORY SYSTEM

THE industrial revolution described in a preceding chapter brought an enormous increase of wealth and prosperity to the country. And though its benefits tended at first to accumulate in the hands of a few, yet in the process of two or three generations they have become diffused through the whole nation, and have helped materially to raise the standard of living even for the poorest. In no point is this higher standard of life more conspicuous than in the matter of clothing. For centuries the poorer classes in these islands were clothed mainly in woollen, linen and silk being luxuries reserved for the well-to-do, and cotton, at any rate in large quantities, being of comparatively recent introduction. Now woollen fabrics are costly, and, as every housewife knows, they tend rapidly to deteriorate with washing. One practical result must have been that the poorer classes in this country could rarely afford the luxury of clean clothes. With the rapid multiplication of cheap cotton fabrics towards the close of the eighteenth century, all this was changed. The new stuffs were within the reach of the poorest; the wives and children of the labourer and the factory operative could have two or three dresses where they had but one before, and could afford to wash them again and again without detriment

to their usefulness. Few inventions, it is probable, have done more to increase the comfort and the health of the poor.

But in the earlier years of the change these benefits were purchased at a heavy price. As already shown, between 1780 and 1790 the population of Manchester, swollen by recruits drawn in from the surrounding country to work in the new cotton-mills, had almost doubled itself. Year after year new mills sprang up, to be filled, as soon as they were built, by ever new recruits. The results of this process are well described by Dr. Aikin.

“The invention and improvement of machines to shorten labour has had a surprising influence to extend our trade, and also to call in hands from all parts, especially children for the Cotton Mills. It is the wise plan of Providence that in this life there shall be no good without its attendant inconvenience. There are many which are too obvious in these Cotton Mills, and similar factories, which counteract that increase of population usually consequent on the improved facilities of labour. In these children of very tender age are employed, many collected from the Workhouses of London and Westminster, and transported in crowds, as apprentices to masters resident many hundred miles distant, where they serve unknown, unprotected and forgotten by those to whose care nature or the laws had consigned them. These children are usually too long confined to work in close rooms, often during the whole night: the air they breathe from the oil, &c., employed in the machinery and other circumstances is injurious: little regard is paid to their cleanliness, and frequent changes from

a warm and dense to a cold and thin atmosphere are pre-disposing causes to sickness and disability, and particularly to the epidemic fever which so generally is to be met with in these factories. It is also much to be questioned if Society does not receive detriment from the manner in which children are thus employed during their early years. They are not generally strong to labour, or capable of pursuing any other branch of business, when the term of their apprenticeship expires. The females are wholly uninstructed in sewing, knitting, and other domestic affairs requisite to make them notable and frugal wives and mothers. This is a very great misfortune to them and the public, as is sadly proved by a comparison of the families of labourers in husbandry, and of manufacturers¹ in general. In the former we meet with neatness, cleanliness and comfort : in the latter with filth, rags and poverty, although their wages may be nearly double those of the husbandman. It must be added, that the want of early religious instruction and example, and the numerous and indiscriminate associations in these buildings, are very unfavourable to their future conduct in life. To mention these grievances is to point out their remedies : and in many factories they have been adopted with true benevolence and much success. But in all cases the Public have a right to see that its members are not wantonly injured, or carelessly lost.”²

The above passage contains an admirable summary of the chief evils wrought upon the poor, and upon the community at large, by the early cotton lords in their race for wealth. It was the malignant fever which was

¹ *i.e.* factory operatives, as we should say now.

² *Description of the Country Round Manchester* (pp. 219, 220).

very prevalent in the mills during the closing decades of the eighteenth century which first drew attention to the subject. The early factories were badly constructed ; often they were mere make-shift buildings—two or three cottages knocked together, or something of the kind. Little attention was paid to ventilation or sanitary requirements ; moreover the machinery often ran night and day, and the importance of cleanliness, for the sake of the machinery and the fabric, if not for that of the workers, was at the outset very imperfectly realised. It is little wonder that in these close, hot rooms, crowded throughout the twenty-four hours with human beings, infectious diseases found occasion to spread. So early as 1784, on the occasion of an outburst of fever in the Radcliffe cotton factories, the Manchester magistrates had requested a committee of medical men to investigate the matter. Amongst these medical men were Drs. Percival and Ferriar, of whose doings we have learnt something in the preceding chapter. Later, in 1796, a permanent committee, of which these gentlemen were members, was formed in Manchester under the style of the Board of Health, and a series of resolutions was drawn up by Dr. Percival, which were quoted at length by Sir R. Peel in his evidence before the Select Committee of 1816. Premising that the object of the Board was to prevent the generation and spread of infectious diseases, the resolutions proceeded to draw attention to the unhealthy conditions in which the operatives, and especially children, were forced to labour in cotton-factories—the confinement ; the hot and impure air ; the long hours of labour both by night and day ; and the want of proper education and religious instruction. In conclusion the

resolutions invoked the aid of Parliament to establish laws "for the wise, humane, and equal government of all such works."¹

These resolutions, though their immediate effect was not conspicuous, appear to have first drawn public attention to the evils prevalent in cotton factories, and to have given the first impulse to legislation on the subject. Peel owed his indebtedness to Percival and his associates in the preparation of the Act of 1802.²

Percival, it will be seen, like Aikin, was not content with drawing public attention to the physical evils attendant on the overcrowding of factories, and the resultant danger to the community, but proceeded to point out the effect upon the health and the morals of the persons, especially the young, employed under such inhuman conditions. For the great majority of the early workers in the cotton-mills were children; and the children began their work as early in many cases as five or six years of age, and worked the same hours as the men and women employed with them. As we have already seen, in the passages quoted in a previous chapter from Defoe and Radcliffe,³ long before the introduction of the factory system the children of the yeoman and the cottager had been employed from a very early age at the spinning-wheel; children in the workhouses were set to labour from the age of six; and the children of the handloom weavers, at any rate until the end of the second decade of the nineteenth century, worked side by side with their parents in the

¹ *Report of the Minutes of Evidence on the State of Children employed in Manufactories*, 1816, pp. 139-40; *Proceedings of the Board of Health in Manchester*, 1796-1805. Manchester, 1805.

² *Report*, p. 133.

³ Above, pp. 28, 29.

cellars of Manchester and neighbouring towns, often for as long as fifteen hours a day. There was little sentiment, then, in the eighteenth century, on the part of the parents to prevent the exploitation of child labour; and the manufacturer naturally looked to this source to reduce the expenses of working his mills. But child labour was not only cheap and tractable, it was also peculiarly suited for the manufacturer's requirements. Much of the labour incident to the working of cotton-spinning machinery was of the lightest kind. The machines ran of themselves. The attendants had merely to piece together the broken threads, remove accidental obstructions, and clean the machines; and for work of this kind a child's slender fingers and small lithe body were admirably fitted. Thus William Lockhart, writing of the New Lanark Mills under David Dale, says, "The greater number of children a widow has, she lives so much the more comfortably: and upon such account alone she is often a tempting object to a second husband. Indeed at cotton-mills it often happens that young children support their aged parents by their industry."¹

Child labour, then, was regarded as essential to the profitable working of the cotton-mills. But it is probable that in a town like Manchester the evils attendant on the employment of children, to which Percival and Aikin drew attention, were mitigated by various circumstances. Many of the children employed, it is likely, lived in the town with their parents; and in any case the conditions of life in a large city, and the force of public opinion, would do something to keep cruelty and oppression within bounds. But cotton-

¹ Sinclair's *Statistical Account of Scotland*, Vol. XV.

mills at this time were worked by water-power, and many were necessarily built in remote districts, far removed from supervision by public opinion or the possibility of legal interference. In such circumstances, there being no resident population in the neighbourhood of the mills, the master manufacturer was forced to look elsewhere for his supply of child labour. In any case he would have found it difficult to obtain as many volunteers as he required, for parents very generally at this time regarded it as discreditable to send their children to work in the factories. The father who allowed his child to enter a mill "made himself the town's talk, and the unfortunate girl so given up by her parents in after life found the door of household employment closed against her, because she had been a factory girl."¹ In these circumstances the manufacturer drew upon the only available source of supply—the parish apprentices. In those days it was the practice for pauper children, from the age of six and upwards, to be employed on useful work, either in the workhouse itself, or as apprentices to outside employers. In the Bloomsbury Workhouse, for instance, there were some two hundred children, from the age of six to twelve or fourteen, employed for ten hours a day in summer and nine in winter, their chief occupations being to wind silk or to pick oakum.² But the children were as a rule apprenticed, as opportunity served, to outside employers—farmers, manufacturers, etc. ; and, in the early years of the great industry, very large numbers of them were thus sent to the spinning-mills. So great was the

¹ "Alfred," *History of the Factory Movement*, 1857, Vol. I., p. 16.

² Evidence of Dr. Ogle before the Committee of 1816.

demand for child labour that the apprentices went in many cases when only six years old—some even younger—to serve their time in the factories. Many of the first mills, as already shown, were of necessity built in remote districts, far from any possibility of effective supervision. Many of the early masters were men of little education, sprung from the ranks of the yeomen or even labourers: men of coarse fibre, and drunk with the prospects of unlimited wealth.¹

It is not necessary here to fill in the details of the picture: they may be found in the ghastly story told by Robert Blincoe,² and the evidence given before the Committee of 1832. Even where the mill-owners were themselves liberal and humane, the vicious system still permitted all manner of iniquity and oppression. Here is a description given by Sir R. Peel of the state of affairs, towards the close of the eighteenth century, in his own mill at Radcliffe: ³ “The house in which I have a concern gave employment at one time to near a thousand children of this description (*i.e.* parish apprentices). Having other pursuits, it was not often in my power to visit the factories, but whenever such visits were made, I was struck with the uniform appearance of bad health, and in many cases stunted growth of

¹ See Hutchins and Harrison, *A History of Factory Legislation* (1903), p. 19; Gaskell, *On the Manufacturing Population*, 1833, pp. 52, 53.

² *Memoir of Robert Blincoe, an Orphan Boy*. Manchester, 1832.

Robert Blincoe was a pauper child, who in 1799, at the age of seven, was sent, with a number of other workhouse apprentices, to a cotton-mill, where he was forced to work fourteen hours a day, “half-starved and cruelly treated by his taskmaster.” In manhood he wrote an account of his experiences, which was edited and published by John Brown, who appears to have been at some pains to verify the painful facts given in the narrative.

³ *Report of 1816*, p. 133.

the children : the hours of labour were regulated by the interest of the Overseer, whose remuneration depending on the quantity of work done, he was often induced to make the poor children work excessive hours, and to stop their complaints by trifling bribes. Finding our own factories under such management, and learning that like practices prevailed in other parts of the Kingdom where similar machinery was in use, the children being much overworked, and often little or no regard paid to cleanliness and ventilation in the building," Peel proceeded, as he told the Committee of 1816, to introduce the Act of 1802 in order to remedy the evils thus brought to light.

Peel in short invoked the law to do what he was unable to do for himself. For, in a case such as this, good intentions on the part of an employer, however well disposed, were of little avail. Nothing less than personal and incessant supervision would suffice to prevent oppression and abuse. A further illustration is afforded by the history of the works at New Lanark, the management of which devolved upon Robert Owen at the beginning of 1800. David Dale, their sole owner for some years, was, as "Alfred" says, "known as one of the most spirited, enterprising and benevolent men of his age," and New Lanark was "one of the most humanely conducted factories in the Empire."¹ It had been made the subject of a laudatory notice in the *Annual Register* for 1782,² the writer dwelling specially on the provision made by Dale for the health and comfort of the children employed : "The boys enjoy hours of

¹ *History of the Factory Movement*, Vol. I., p. 20.

² Part II., p. 33*.

relaxation in succession. Their apartment was likewise clean and well aired, and ten schoolmasters are daily employed in their tuition."

Again, the reports of the "Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor" contain an account by Sir Thomas Bernard, given on the authority of Professor Garnett of the Royal Institution, on the state of New Lanark under David Dale. The report mentions that five hundred children are employed, who are entirely fed, clothed, and educated by Dale: and that "the healthy and pleasurable appearance of these children has frequently attracted the attention of the traveller." The Reporter goes on to note that cleanliness and fresh air are insisted on; the children wash themselves before work and after it; boys and girls lodge apart, in airy rooms; their clothes are regularly washed; they receive good food and plenty of it. Their supper is fixed at 7.0 p.m.; and, supper over, they attend classes until 9.0 p.m. Three regular masters, it is added, instruct the lesser children during the day. Seven others assist in the evening.¹

There is no mention in this last account of any provision for holidays—unless attendance at Church on Sundays may be reckoned as coming under that head, and as the church held only one hundred and fifty, and from five hundred to eight hundred children were employed, even this form of recreation could only be enjoyed at long

¹ *Reports*, Vol. II. (1800), pp. 364 *seqq.* The date of the Reporter's visit is not given by Bernard. But see Dr. Garnett's own Report, *Tour through the Highlands of Scotland*, first published in 1800. Dr. Garnett's visit was apparently made in 1799, for he mentions in a footnote that an English company, of whom his friend Owen was one, have just purchased the mills.

intervals.¹ Their hours of work were eleven and a half a day, *i.e.* thirteen hours, with intervals of one and a half hours for meals. For the rest, the report is chiefly noteworthy for the fact that the Reporter thinks it necessary to mention that the elementary rules of health and decency were not violated in the model factory of the Empire. In "Alfred's" *History* we find a more critical account of the conditions under which New Lanark Mills were worked. Mr. Dale, like most of the employers of his time, found some difficulty in procuring a sufficient supply of free labour, a difficulty which was no doubt increased by the remote situation of his mills. The surrounding peasantry, accustomed to their own standard of comfort and personal freedom, refused to enter his employment. Mr. Dale built cottages near the mills, but so great was the aversion to work in a factory that "very few, not being homeless and friendless, would accept of house-accommodation from Mr. Dale on the lowest possible terms." As a matter of fact, his mills were largely recruited in 1791, as we read in Garnett's report, from the passengers on a vessel, with two hundred emigrants from Skye, which was wrecked in the neighbourhood of the Clyde.

In this difficulty Dale, like others, "applied to the managers of charities, and the parish authorities of Edinburgh, for a supply of children. The application was successful, and the children under Mr. Dale's control ultimately numbered five hundred.² Mr. Dale, in exchange for the services of these children, undertook

¹ David Dale's letter to Manchester Board of Health.

² In November, 1793, according to Lockhart (*Sinclair's Statistical Account of Scotland*, Vol. XV.) there were 795 persons under 18 employed at the New Lanark Mills, of whom 204 were less than ten years old.

to feed, lodge and clothe them. It has been our lot," "Alfred" continues, "to know two women, who, in early life, had been Mr. Dale's apprentices. On the authority of these witnesses, Mr. Dale was a man of benevolent disposition, but seldom visited his factories; when he did visit them, it was remarked that 'things were put in better order,' and he sometimes brought the children little presents, and was at heart the friend of his work-people. . . . The ages of the children when apprenticed to Mr. Dale were from five to eight, the period of apprenticeship from seven to nine years, the hours of labour in the factory from six in the morning to seven in the evening."¹

Owen, in his evidence before the Committee of 1816, explained that from these thirteen hours were to be deducted one and a half hours allowed for meals, so that the children actually worked eleven and a half hours a day.² In describing the state of the children on his taking over the management, Owen explained to the Committee that the children under Mr. Dale's régime were "extremely well fed, well clothed, well lodged, and very great care taken of them out of the mills." Nevertheless, in consequence of the long hours of work and their tender years, their growth was stunted, their limbs occasionally deformed, and through sheer exhaustion they made very slow progress in the night-school, even in learning the alphabet. Dale himself, writing in 1796 to the Manchester Board of Health, can only claim that out of 507 scholars, 80 could read well,

¹ *History of the Factory Movement*, Vol. I., pp. 19, 20.

² The hours were from 6.0 a.m. to 7.0 p.m., with intervals from 9 to 9.30 a.m. and from 2.0 to 3.0 p.m. (David Dale's letter to Manchester Board of Health).

and 24 of these 80 stood in no need of further instruction in reading.

And in many mills at this time the children were not well fed, well clothed or well lodged, little or no care was taken for their physical and moral welfare: the hours of work were even longer, and the conditions far more oppressive.

So matters stood when Owen entered in January, 1800, on his duties at New Lanark. To place his future work there in its true proportions, it is desirable at this point to anticipate a little, and to refer briefly to the course taken by the Factory Movement up to 1816.

Moved by the considerations already set forth, and with the assistance, as he has told us, of Percival and other Manchester doctors, Sir. R. Peel prepared and passed through Parliament in 1802 a measure known as the "Health and Morals of Apprentices Act." The Act prescribed the periodical whitewashing of all factories and the introduction of proper ventilation. For the rest, its provisions related solely to the employment of parish apprentices, who formed at the time the vast majority of the children and young persons employed in factories. The maximum working hours for apprentices were fixed at twelve a day; night work was to be discontinued; the apprentices were to be instructed in reading, writing, and arithmetic; to go to church once a month; and separate sleeping-apartments were to be provided for the two sexes. The Act, less no doubt by the force of its legal sanctions than by the attention which it called to the subject, and by the standard of humanity set up, appears to have helped, with other social forces, in bringing about some improvement of the conditions of child labour.

The newer factories were built with more regard to sanitary requirements; the rooms were loftier; they were better ventilated; more attention was paid to cleanliness—the last reform being made in the interests of the masters quite as much as in those of the workmen. Working throughout the night was gradually discontinued. A more important and not wholly beneficial change was the substitution of “free” labour for the system of apprenticeship. Many causes working concurrently appear to have contributed to this change. By some employers, no doubt, the provisions of the Act of 1802 were felt to impose irksome restrictions, whereas there was no power but that of the parents to impose limits on the labour of “free” children. And of the parents, it seems clear, some had too little humanity, and many were too poor to dare enter a protest. Again, apprentices were now more difficult to procure. The magistrates in many towns refused any longer to allow the pauper children to be apprenticed to the cotton manufacturers, or qualified their permission with conditions which the employers were reluctant to accept.¹

Again, the reluctance of the parents to allow their children to enter the factories appears to have gradually broken down, partly, no doubt, by greater familiarity with the conditions, largely under the pressure of increasing poverty as the burden of taxation imposed by

¹ See *Report of 1816*. Evidence of Theodore Price, pp. 122, 124, on his own refusal, and the refusal of the Birmingham Magistrates, to sign indentures to cotton-mills. At p. 182 it is given in evidence that the Preston Workhouse authorities refuse any longer to apprentice their children to cotton-mills. The Manchester Magistrates, so early as 1784, had passed a resolution binding themselves not to apprentice to mills where the children worked more than ten hours a day (Hutchins and Harrison, *op. cit.*, p. 9).

the long wars grew heavier and heavier. But the main cause of the rapid transformation, in the earlier years of the last century, in the character of the labour employed, is no doubt to be found in the altered conditions of the industry. With the introduction of steam as a motive-power, employers were no longer forced to place their factories by the banks of streams in out-of-the-way country districts. They came now by preference to the large centres of population, where the markets were ready to hand, and where labour was abundant.

From this time onwards some of the worst evils of the factory system gradually disappeared. The children now lived at home, in the charge of their parents. They had, at any rate, the daily change of scene, and such opportunities of home life as could be enjoyed on a Sunday. The work was done in larger and cleaner buildings, and generally under healthier conditions. The master was for the most part of higher social type, and if not always more humane, at least more amenable to public opinion. And, not least, the eyes of the public had to some extent been opened. But notwithstanding all these ameliorating influences, it is abundantly clear from the evidence given before the Select Committee of 1816 how much still remained to be done, and how inhuman were the conditions at the best. The children began work far too young. The manufacturers took such labour as they required when it was offered by the parents: and the parents sent their children to the mill as soon as they were able to work, sometimes that they themselves might live in idleness on the money so earned; more often, perhaps, because they could not

afford to keep them at home. Thus Mr. John S. Ward and Mr. Peter Noaille gave evidence before the Committee of 1816 that in their silk-mills the children commonly began work at six or seven years of age. Thomas Whitelegg had known children employed in cotton-mills at Manchester as early as five. Richard Arkwright gave evidence that children used to enter the Cromford mills at seven or eight.

Again, the hours of work were far too long. In the Bloomsbury Workhouse the children had worked ten hours a day in summer and nine in winter. Dale had allowed his apprentices to work eleven and a half hours a day in all. But the bulk of the manufacturers, even the best and most enlightened of their number, who gave evidence in 1816 had fixed the minimum hours of work at twelve a day or seventy-two a week. Generally this meant a stretch of thirteen hours, with one interval of an hour for dinner; breakfast and tea being brought to the child in the mill, and snatched at intervals during the work, the machinery going at full speed all the while. Sometimes the interval for dinner was omitted, and the children were forced day after day to work twelve hours without a break.¹ Some manufacturers worked regularly from 5 a.m. to 7 p.m., with but one hour's interval—or thirteen hours' solid work in the day. In many cases even this limit was exceeded. In the Backbarrow Mills the regular hours, all the year round, were from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m., with but one hour's interval for meals. And many of these hapless children were in addition called upon to attend several hours on Sunday for the purpose of cleaning the machinery. Peel himself expressed the

¹ *Report*, pp. 212, 213.

opinion that fourteen or fifteen hours work a day had become too general.¹

It was contended by the manufacturers that these long hours were not really hours of work ; that the children had to be in attendance, but that no physical exertion was involved, since they had merely to watch the machines, and piece the broken threads. But they had to stand practically for the whole time. In most mills no provision was made for their sitting down at all ; and one manufacturer, Mr. William Sidgwick, more outspoken than the rest, put the facts very clearly :

“ Q.—When a child is found sitting in the mill, is not that contrary to the rules ?

“ A.—Certainly, I expect them to be at work.

“ Q.—The whole day ?

“ A.—Yes : the master will not notice it, if the work is in a proper state.

“ Q.—If the threads were not breaking, and the work was going on properly, you would have no objection to their sitting down ?

“ A.—No : I should not, occasionally ; but it might become a habit.

“ Q.—Could they sit down, and yet be able to superintend the threads ?

“ A.—Not correctly : I think they would see those in the immediate neighbourhood of their seats, but not those at the other end, perhaps.”²

The evil effects of the long hours of confinement and the fatigue of standing were much enhanced by the heated atmosphere. After 1802 the ventilation of the mills, as already said, was much better than it had been. But

¹ *Report*, p. 137.

Ibid., p. 118.

it appears that the finer qualities of yarn, at any rate, required a warm atmosphere ; and in many factories the air was accordingly, summer and winter, maintained at a temperature of about 80 degrees.

Under such conditions it was inevitable that the health of the children should deteriorate. The medical witnesses testified to a general impairment of the physique ; the digestion suffered, the whole organism was enfeebled ; the children became pale, slight, and weedy-looking. Specific ailments of various kinds were induced. Moreover, accidents, owing to the fingers and other parts of the body being caught in the moving machinery, were by no means infrequent, especially towards the close of the long day's work.

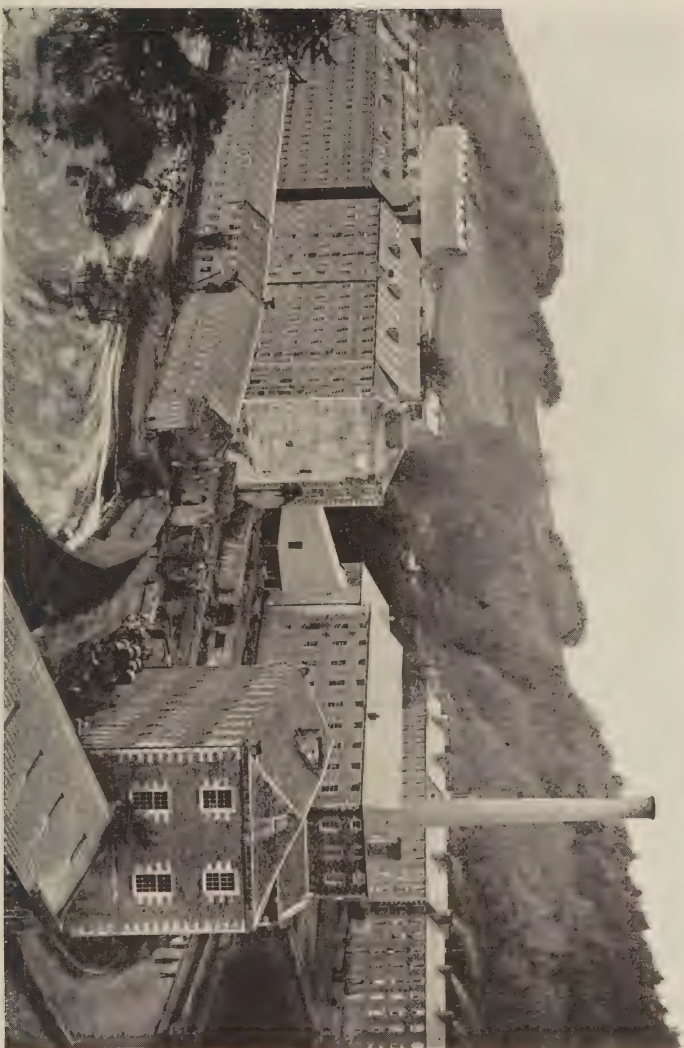
It need hardly be said that the children had little energy left to take advantage of the educational opportunities which, as the masters one after another explained to the Committee, were freely offered to them. Some of the employers provided an hour's schooling in the evening, for such as chose to attend after thirteen hours' work in the day. Others placed their reliance upon the religious and moral instruction which could be afforded in the Sunday Schools. But attendance at the schools was, as a rule, voluntary, and but a small proportion of the children cared to come.

Such, then, were the general conditions of child labour in the cotton-factories up to the passing of the Factory Act of 1819. To what extent Owen succeeded in ameliorating the lot of the children employed at New Lanark we shall see in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

NEW LANARK

THUS in January, 1800, Robert Owen entered upon his kingdom. The road from the old grey town of Lanark to the mills runs for about a mile between stone walls across a treeless and somewhat bleak plateau, which forms a stern setting for the beauty of New Lanark itself. For some miles above the town of Lanark the Clyde flows through a deep ravine between banks which form precipitous cliffs of no great height at the water's edge, and then shelve backwards at a slope which permits of their being covered with a luxuriant growth of woodland. For some distance the river falls in a series of cascades—the Falls of the Clyde: but by the time it reaches New Lanark the descent has become less rapid, the channel has broadened out, and the river retreats so as to leave on one shore, between the wooded banks and the stream, a broad, gently sloping shelf of rock. The stream itself widens to a crescent shape at this point, and half its channel is occupied by a small, richly green island. Just opposite this island, on the broad, almost flat shelf which forms the floor of a natural amphitheatre, whose steep sides, clothed with trees, rise abruptly to the plateau above, lie the village and the Mills—



From a photo by Davidson & Sons, New Lanark.

THE MILLS AT NEW LANARK.

three or four rows of grey stone houses, and four gaunt cotton-mills, seven storeys high, not indeed smoke-begrimed, but planned with as rigid an economy of the beautiful as cotton-mills in any other part of the world. The cold grey colouring and the unlovely squareness of the buildings make up a picture which seems altogether unworthy of the exquisite beauty of its frame.

Such was New Lanark as it was built by Richard Arkwright and David Dale in 1784 ; such it was when Robert Owen made his home there in 1800 ; twenty-five years later, when he left it for ever, the chief outward memorial of his labours and his dreams were two large buildings hardly less ungainly than the mills themselves. And to this day the external aspect of the place is scarcely changed ; to this day the mills depend for their motive-power upon the water brought from an upper reach of the river through the long tunnel which David Dale caused to be dug out of the solid rock.

In January, 1800, the establishment, the sole management and direction of which were vested in Robert Owen, consisted of some 1,800 or 2,000 persons, of whom about 500 were children from the parish workhouses who had been apprenticed to the mills for a term of years. For the rest, the original population, as Owen described it twelve years later, was "a collection of the most ignorant and destitute from all parts of Scotland, possessing the usual characteristics of poverty and ignorance. They were generally indolent and much addicted to theft, drunkenness and falsehood, with all their concomitant evils, and strongly experiencing

the misery which these ever produce.”¹ Nevertheless he was able in 1812 to write that these same persons “had now become conspicuously honest, industrious, sober and orderly, and that an idle individual, one in liquor, or a thief, is scarcely to be seen from the beginning to the end of the year.”²

But this result had been brought about gradually and in the face of many difficulties and discouragements. To begin with, Owen’s “government,” as he himself calls it, was a strictly limited monarchy. He seems indeed to have had from his partners the full trust and confidence to which his past career as a successful manufacturer entitled him. But he was a junior partner, a man himself with little capital, acting as the representative of men older and wealthier than himself. They were simply manufacturers, probably neither better nor worse

¹ No man is an impartial witness in his own cause, and there can, I think, be little doubt that to make the contrast more effective, Owen unconsciously darkened the shadows in the picture which he drew of the state of New Lanark in 1800. Dale, as has been said, was a just and benevolent man, and he had certainly done much to improve the lot of his workpeople. He had set his face against drunkenness and immorality; he had provided good food, clothing, and housing for the children, and had given them, in addition, the means of proper schooling; he had set up a store at which articles of good quality could be purchased at a cheap rate. That these measures had failed of their full effect for want of the continuous supervision which only the master’s eye could have exercised, must be admitted. But there is sufficient testimony to assure us that the state of New Lanark under Dale was not quite so desperate as it was represented by Owen. [See in particular Lockhart’s report in the *Statistical Account* quoted, and a *A Refutation of Mr. Owen’s System*, by the Rev. John Aiton, Edinburgh, 1824. Aiton, though strongly biassed by his theological views, is on the whole a fair-minded witness.] But Owen did without doubt effect a marvellous improvement, partly by working on the lines laid down by Dale, partly by innovations of his own.

² *Statement regarding the New Lanark Establishment*. Edinburgh, 1812.

than their contemporaries, looking in the first instance for a large return on their capital, and little likely to share their junior partner's enthusiasm for reforming the world. The junior partner's first concern, then, was to secure an ample dividend : whatever measures he undertook which had not this result for their immediate aim, must, in so far as they involved expenditure, be justified on the score of their ultimate commercial advantage. But the opposition to Owen's schemes which proceeded from the workpeople themselves was more serious, because more difficult to combat, and to one of less sanguine temperament must have proved almost hopelessly discouraging. The late proprietor, David Dale, had given a hundred proofs of his goodwill to the people who worked in his factories. He had failed, no doubt, to devote the incessant personal attention to the business which was necessary for the complete realisation of his benevolent intentions : but he had done what he could ; the people knew him as a just man, and one who cared for something beyond the profit which he derived from their labour. But Owen and his associates had come from England—in itself matter for hostility—with novel ideas and speaking an unfamiliar tongue. The old managers had been dismissed, the old machinery displaced : and now the new manager wished to impose new customs and regulations, and to teach new ways of doing the work. To what could all these things tend but the piling up of bigger dividends, and heavier burdens on the workers. The cotton lords of England had certainly given the poor little cause to credit them with any disinterested desire for the well-being of their operatives : if the people of New Lanark viewed Owen's

innovations with suspicion and even overt hostility, they had at any rate some reason for their conduct.

Step by step, however, and month by month, the fine simplicity of the man, his pure unalloyed goodwill, his high character, made themselves felt; and all opposition was finally conquered, when, in 1806, the American embargo on cotton exportation had nearly brought the trade to a standstill. It was impossible to continue working the mills; but Owen persuaded his partners to allow the workpeople their full wages for the four months during which the embargo lasted; and by this act of wise generosity he finally won the full confidence and affection of all those employed in the factories.¹

After the discharge of the former managers and the instalment in their place of a man called Humphreys, who on Owen's recommendation had succeeded him in Mr. Drinkwater's factory, Owen's next step was to replace the obsolete types of machinery, and to introduce improved methods of working. He then set himself to fight the dishonesty and drunkenness which prevailed to a ruinous extent. Writing twelve years later, he says, "He soon discovered that theft was extended through almost all the ramifications of the community, and the receipt of stolen goods through all the country around. To remedy this evil, not one legal punishment was inflicted, not one individual imprisoned, even for an hour; but checks and other regulations

¹ In this Owen followed a precedent set by his predecessor. One of the mills first built was burnt to the ground in 1788; and two hundred and fifty people were thrown out of employment. David Dale is said to have paid them their full wages until the mill could be started again (*Threading my Way*, by Robert Dale Owen, p. 15).

were introduced. They were at the same time instructed how to direct their industry in legal and useful occupations. Thus the difficulty of committing the crime was increased, the detection afterwards rendered more easy, the habit of honest industry formed, and the pleasure of good conduct increased.”¹

To combat the second evil, he appointed caretakers, who patrolled the streets of the village each night, and reported all who were found intoxicated. On the following morning the offenders were duly fined. Partly because of this discipline, but more perhaps as a gradual result of the influence of a higher public sense on such matters, drunkenness became so rare in the establishment that the statement quoted at the beginning of the present chapter seems to have been no idle boast. Owen's young son, Robert Dale, tells us that one day in his twelfth year (*i.e.* in 1813), when accompanying his father on the daily visit to the mills, he saw “at a little distance on the path before us, a man who stopped at intervals in his walk, and staggered from side to side.

“‘Papa,’ said I, ‘look at that man. He must have been taken suddenly ill.’

“‘What do you suppose is the matter with him, Robert?’

“‘I don't know. I never saw any man act so. Is he subject to fits? Do you know him, papa?’

“‘Yes, my dear, I know him. He is not subject to fits, but he is a very unfortunate man.’

“‘What kind of illness has he?’

¹ Second Essay on the Formation of Character, quoted in *Autobiography*, Vol. I., pp. 279-80.

“My father stopped, looked first at the man before us, and then at me. ‘Thank God, my son,’ he said at last, ‘that you have never before seen a drunken man.’”¹

Not the least important of Owen’s innovations was the village store. The establishment of New Lanark had sprung up suddenly, under artificial conditions, apart from the usual channels of food-supply. The population was thriftless; and the retail shopkeepers seem to have ministered to their thriftlessness by selling their wares on credit, and necessarily at extravagant prices. The articles sold were of poor quality, and all the shops sold spirits. Owen started² a store on behalf of the proprietors, purchasing food and clothing of good quality wholesale, and retailing them at a moderate profit to all who chose to purchase. The prices charged, though, as Owen tells us, some 25 per cent. lower than those of the private shopkeepers, were yet sufficient to cover all the expenses of the business, and leave a profit of about £700 a year, which was devoted entirely to the maintenance of the schools. So that he was able to point out to the Committee of 1816, as he had no doubt already pointed out to his partners, that the expenses of the schools

¹ *Threading my Way*, p. 71. Owen did not, however, succeed in entirely stopping the practice of drinking on New Year’s Day. Fines were inflicted for the irregularity, and a special holiday in the summer was offered to all who would come to work as usual on New Year’s Day, instead of giving up the day to idleness and drink. But these measures appear, even as late as 1814, to have met with little success (see John Walker’s letter dated December 26, 1814, and the order in relation to New Year’s Day quoted in *New Existence*, Part V., pp. lxi-x).

² Or more probably improved and set going again a store already started by Dale.

did not form a charge on the profits of the mills, but, in the most literal sense, were borne by the people themselves.¹

But the innovation which aroused the most active opposition was Owen's insistence upon cleanliness and good order in the village streets, and in the houses of the people. He found the streets unswept—a rubbish heap or dunghill in front of each door—the houses small, neglected, and dirty: the natural decay of the fabric being expedited by the action of the tenants, who in some cases would burn the window-shutters and inside doors for firewood, and then decamp.² Owen, at the expense of the company, as it would seem, enlarged, repaired, and, where necessary, rebuilt the houses, removed the dunghills, and cleansed the streets.³

He further drew up a set of rules providing for the observation of proper cleanliness, order, and good behaviour on the part of all the inhabitants in future. Under these rules (which are printed in full in the Appendix to Part V. of *The New Existence of Man upon Earth*) every house was to be cleaned once a week and whitewashed at least once a year by the tenant; the tenants were further, in rotation, to provide for the cleaning of the public stairs and the sweeping of the roadway in front of their dwellings; it was forbidden to throw ashes and dirty water into the streets, or to keep cattle, swine, poultry or dogs in the houses. There were provisions for the prevention of trespass and damage to the company's fences and other property.

¹ *Report* of 1816, p. 22. See also *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 63.

² *New Existence*, Part V. (1854), Appendix, p. xi.

³ *Robert Owen at New Lanark* (1839), p. 4.

In the winter months all doors were to be closed at 10.30, and no one was to be abroad without permission after that hour. The minimum age for children to begin work in the mills was fixed at ten, and from five to ten years of age all children might attend, free of charge, the school provided by the company. Temperance in the use of liquors was enjoined.

The two final rules are of sufficient interest to be quoted in full :

“ 18. That as there are a very great variety of religious sects in the world (and which are probably adapted to different constitutions under different circumstances, seeing there are many good and conscientious characters in each), it is particularly recommended, as a means of uniting the inhabitants of the village into one family, that while each faithfully adheres to the principles which he most approves, at the same time all shall think charitably of their neighbours respecting their religious opinions, and not presumptuously suppose that theirs alone are right.”

“ 19. And, lastly. That all the village shall, to the utmost of their power as far as is consistent with their duty to God and society, endeavour, both by word and deed, to make every one happy with whom they have any intercourse.”

The government of the establishment, it will be seen, was of a paternal kind. But Owen was not so ill-advised as to attempt to enforce foreign standards of cleanliness upon an unwilling peasantry by sheer despotism, however benevolent. The constitution provided for some kind of representative government. The village was divided into wards, or “neighbour divisions,” each of which

chose by ballot a "principal." The principals, in turn, met together and chose from among their number twelve jurymen, who were charged with the twofold duty of seeing that the regulations were duly understood and observed, and of acting as a judicial board, to try offenders and to mete out appropriate punishment. Some of these delegates had, in the beginning of the new régime, no enviable task to fulfil. From an anonymous pamphlet, written by one who had himself been brought up in Owen's time at New Lanark, we get a peep behind the scenes.¹ Owen "advised that they should appoint a committee from amongst themselves, every week, to inspect the houses in the village and to insert in a book, to be given for that purpose, a faithful report of the state of each house as they might happen to find it. This recommendation was upon the whole pretty cordially acceded to by the male part of the population, but the rage and opposition it met with from the women, I well remember, was unbounded. They almost unanimously resolved to meet the visitants with locked doors. They bestowed upon them the appellation of 'Bug Hunters,' and Mr. Owen escaped not without his share of the general odium."

Robert Dale Owen tells us that gradually the opposition was overcome, the force of example and the kindness and tact of Owen and his wife doing much to bring about the desired result. Meanwhile an example of order and cleanliness was set by the master himself. "Within the mills everything was punctiliously kept. Whenever I visited them with my father, I observed that he picked

¹ *Robert Owen at New Lanark, etc.*, by one formerly a teacher at New Lanark. Manchester, 1839.

up the smallest flocks of cotton from the floor, handing them to some child near by, to put into his waste-bag.

“‘Papa,’ said I one day, ‘what *does* it signify—such a little speck of cotton?’

“‘The value of the cotton,’ he replied, ‘is nothing, but the example is much. It is very important that these people should acquire strict habits of order and economy.’”¹

One instance of Owen’s benevolent disposition must be quoted at length, for it illustrates not less the paternal attitude which he assumed towards his people, than the filial response which it seems to have elicited. Surely no man of less admirable simplicity could have ventured to propound, or have succeeded in imposing, a device such as that described in the following extract :—

“But that which I found to be the most efficient check upon inferior conduct, was the contrivance of a silent monitor for each one employed in the establishment. This consisted of a four-sided piece of wood, about two inches long and one broad, each side coloured—one side black, another blue, the third yellow, and the fourth white, tapered at the top, and finished with wire eyes, to hang upon a hook with either side to the front. One of these was suspended in a conspicuous place near to each of the persons employed, and the colour at the front told the conduct of the individual during the preceding day, to four degrees of comparison. Bad, denoted by black and No. 4,—indifferent by blue, and No. 3,—good by yellow, and No. 2,—and excellent by

¹ *Threading my Way*, p. 73.

white, and No. 1.¹ Then books of character were provided for each department, in which the name of each one employed in it was inserted in the front of succeeding columns, which sufficed to mark by the number the daily conduct, day by day, for two months; and these books were changed six times a year, and were preserved; by which arrangement I had the conduct of each registered to four degrees of comparison during every day of the week, Sundays excepted, for every year they remained in my employment. The superintendent of each department had the placing daily of these silent monitors, and the master of the mill regulated those of the superintendents in each mill. If any one thought that the superintendent did not do justice, he or she had a right to complain to me, or, in my absence, to the master of the mill, before the number denoting the character was entered in the register. But such complaints very rarely occurred. The act of setting down the number in the book of character, never to be blotted out, might be likened to the supposed recording angel marking the good and bad deeds of poor human nature.”²

Owen tells us that the plan succeeded admirably, and that, as the years went on, black and blue gave place to yellow and white. But probably the plan was not put into operation until he had succeeded in gaining the confidence of the people by other measures.

¹ Joseph Lancaster, who, as a Quaker, was opposed to corporal punishment, used leather labels, stamped with gilt letters, to indicate various degrees of merit and demerit amongst his scholars. It is possible that Owen may have borrowed the idea of the silent monitor from this source (see *A Comparative View of the Plans of Education of Dr. Bell and Mr. Lancaster*, by Joseph Fox, London, 1808).

² *Autobiography*, Vol. I., pp. 80, 81.

At the outset Owen had resolved to take on no more parish apprentices, but to draw the necessary supply of child labour from the population resident in Lanark, and it does not appear that he ever found difficulty in procuring the services of as many children as were required. As we have already seen, he fixed the limit of age at ten ; below that age the children might, if the parents chose, attend the school, but there was no work for them in the factory. On a point of scarcely less importance he was compelled to defer to the wishes of his partners. Dale had worked the mills thirteen hours, with intervals of one and a half hours for meals. Monstrous as those hours appear to us, especially when we remember that a large proportion of those employed were young children, they were too merciful for the ordinary manufacturer of that day. Owen told the Committee of 1816 that for some time during his management the hours of work at the New Lanark Mills were fixed at fourteen a day (including two hours intervals for meals). It was not until January, 1816, that he was enabled to reduce the hours to twelve a day, with one and a quarter hours for meals, leaving ten and three-quarter hours for actual work. In other ways he found his liberty of action during these early years hampered by his partners : they on their part seem ultimately to have taken alarm at the magnitude of his schemes for bettering the condition of the operatives. They presented him with a silver salver, but hinted disapproval of the mixture of philanthropy and business. In the result Owen agreed to purchase the mills from them at the price of £84,000. This was in 1809. During the ten years of the partnership, Owen reckoned that the business

had produced, over and above interest at the rate of 5 per cent. on the capital invested, a dividend of about £60,000, of which sum £7,000 had been expended in payment of wages for the four months when the machinery stood idle.¹

Owen now formed a new partnership to purchase and work the mills. One of his late partners, John Atkinson, joined the new venture. The other members were Dennistown and Alexander Campbell, sons-in-law of Mr. Campbell of Jura, a relative of Mrs. Owen, and Colin Campbell, an associate of Alexander Campbell. But the new partners proved even less amenable than their predecessors. Owen had planned to provide a large schoolroom, lecture hall, dining-room, and other public institutions. The building which was to serve these various purposes—a huge structure 145 feet long by 45 feet wide—had already been completed, at a cost of some £3,000: the fittings and furniture were, according to Owen's plan, to cost as much again. But his partners objected to further expenditure on projects not directly remunerative. They objected also to his liberal scale of wages and salaries, and generally to his schemes of social improvement. The differences became in the course of two or three years so acute that Owen once more offered to buy the concern at a reasonable valuation. On their refusal to sell, he resigned his position as managing director. Owen then proceeded to draw up a pamphlet stating the history of New Lanark; what had already been done and what he had hoped to do for furthering the cause of education and

¹ Compare *Statement Regarding the New Lanark Establishment*, p. 9, with R. Owen's *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 87.

improving the position of the people employed ; and appealing to benevolent and wealthy men to join with him in purchasing the business, not merely for the immediate good to be effected to the population actually employed in the mills, but also that the establishment “ might be a model and example to the manufacturing community, which without some essential change in the formation of their characters, threatened, and now still more threatens, to revolutionise and ruin the empire.”¹

A great part of the years 1812-13 was spent in London, partly on the search for new partners, who should be men of like mind with himself, partly on the business of seeing through the press the first two of his *Essays on the Formation of Character*. The following letter, which bears the postmark 1st February, 1813—the earliest letter of Owen’s which has been preserved—refers to his doings in London at this time, and to the writing of the *Essays*.

“TO MRS. OWEN,
“BRAXFIELD, LANARK.

“LONDON, 34, Fenchurch Street.

“Monday evening.

“Mr. Clegg’s letter, which I have just received, gave me, my dearest Caroline, the greatest pleasure, as it informed me that you, our sisters, and all our dear pets were well and Robert getting daily better.² To know that you are well is the greatest pleasure I have, except to hear that you are happy, as that includes something still more than health, and I now look with the greatest delight to my return, which I shall expedite by every

¹ *Statement*, p. 4.

² Robert Dale, the eldest son, had a long and serious illness this year.



From a print after a drawing by Smart, published in 1822.

ROBERT OWEN.

means in my power. I have been from London since Saturday morning, part of the time with Mr. Lancaster at Labrador House, part with Mr. and Mrs. Tom Borradaile and the Coles, whom our dearest Jane and Julia know, and part with the celebrated and learned Dr. Ireland, whom none of you I daresay know—whatever you may do hereafter. My time is therefore as fully occupied as ever, and I have much to do yet before I can leave the work which I have commenced. The first part of it, however, comes out to-morrow, and the second which I have in hand will finish all I intend to do this journey. And it must afterwards find its level and accomplish its own work. I shall however leave it in very good hands.

“But what am I to say, my dearest Caroline, to relieve your anxieties in the meantime, particularly about my first appearance before the public. All that just now occurs to me to say is that it has been written with care and read and inspected by men of the acknowledged and finest abilities of all parties, and approved by all. But the second is of far more importance in some respects. But it will not contain any doctrines which will not be admired¹ by the leaders of all the sects and parties in the kingdom. You need not therefore have any fears regarding my proceedings, which will soon prove on what foundation they proceed. I am interrupted by Mr. and Mrs. Borradaile, and to save post must hastily conclude. With kind love and kisses to all our dear boys and girls and sisters, with remembrances to all the household. Tell [word undecipherable] Mr. Lancaster

¹ So apparently in the original—though “admitted” would make better sense.

spoke to me about his visit to London, which I cannot object to. Mr. Clegg must supply him with money for his journey if he sets out before I return home, but I will see Mr. Lancaster before I can say when he ought to set out.

“In haste, my dearest Caroline, I must conclude, with kindest wishes for your happiness, and that you will soon have all your wishes fulfilled.

“With the sincerest affection,

“Your truly attached husband,

“R. OWEN.”

In the result Owen succeeded in getting promises of the capital—about £130,000 in all—required to purchase the New Lanark Mills. The most famous of the new partners was Jeremy Bentham, who consented to receive Owen in person. “After some preliminary communication with our mutual friends James Mill and Francis Place, his then two chief counsellors, and some correspondence between him and myself, it was at length arrived at that I was to come to his hermit-like retreat at a particular hour, and that I was, upon entering, to proceed upstairs, and we were to meet half-way upon the stairs. I pursued these instructions, and he, in great trepidation, met me, and taking my hand, while his whole frame was agitated with the excitement, he hastily said—‘Well! well! It is all over. We are introduced. Come into my study.’”¹

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 96. Some fifteen years later young Robert Dale Owen was invited to Bentham’s house. The philosopher’s parting words to him were, “God bless you, if there be such a Being, and, at all events, my young friend, take care of yourself.”—(*Threading my Way*, p. 177.)

Of the other partners four were members of the Society of Friends—William Allen, John Walker, Joseph Fox, and Joseph Forster—and one, Michael Gibbs, a member of the Church of England, and afterwards Lord Mayor of London. Of all the new partners William Allen seems to have taken the most active part in the management of the affair. The proprietor of some large chemical works, and himself a student of science, a Fellow of the Royal Society, and lecturer on natural and experimental philosophy at Guy's Hospital, zealous in good works, especially in the cause of popular education and social reform, he was before all things a devout, if somewhat narrow-minded Christian.¹

Robert Owen's views on religious questions were at this time not so fully developed as in later years, or he was at less pains to promulgate them. There is no indication in the two *Essays on the Formation of Character*, published in this year (1813), that the author rejected all religious revelation. At all events William Allen, in December, 1813, seems to have had no forewarning that he was about to ally himself with one whom he would have considered an infidel. His hesitation and timidity as to joining the partnership appear to have proceeded rather from the excessive scrupulousness of a devout

¹ Robert Dale Owen gives an amusing illustration of Allen's strictness. One day the youth was dining at Allen's house in Plough Court. The host asked the guest, "Will thee have more roast beef?" Absorbed in conversation, young Owen declined, but later asked leave to change his mind, only to meet with the answer, "Robert, thee has already refused." No second supply was forthcoming (*Threading my Way*, p. 87). Allen at about this time was editing the *Philanthropist*, a monthly journal devoted to Social Reform, and especially to Education. He was one of the trustees of the Duke of Kent's estates, and no doubt introduced Owen to the Prince. At a later date Allen started an Agricultural Colony and Industrial Schools at Lindfield in Sussex.

and conscientious Christian about to embark on an enterprise of a novel kind.¹ On December 27, 1813, however, the matter was finally settled between Owen on the one hand, and Allen, Walker, and Fox, on the other.²

Owen's late partners, Atkinson and the Campbells, had refused to sell the business at an agreed price, and the whole concern was therefore advertised for sale by "public roup." From the advertisement, which appeared in the *Glasgow Herald* of December 24, 1813, we learn that the establishment consisted of four cotton-mills, three of seven and one of six storeys, a long building 454 ft. \times 20, used as a storeroom; a machine shop; a brass and iron foundry; and another building which is thus described:

"There is also another building of the following dimensions, at present unoccupied, 145 ft. \times 45 ft. over the walls, containing a cellar 140 ft. long \times 19 ft. broad, and 9 ft. high; *first floor*, above the cellars, one room 140 \times 40 \times 11.6 high; *second floor*, 140 \times 40 \times 21 high. This building has been planned to admit of an extensive store cellar, a public kitchen, eating and exercise room, a school, lecture room, and Church. All of which, it is supposed, may be fitted up in a very compleat manner for a sum not exceeding £2,500, and this arrangement may be formed so as to

¹ See *Life of William Allen* (1846), Vol. I., p. 180,—“much exercised in mind about New Lanark,” and again, “I had much conflict of mind on account of the responsibility involved in it. I trust, however, I had a degree of evidence that it was right.”

² Bentham, apparently, came in after the purchase had actually been completed (see letter dated January 8, 1814, from Allen to Owen, quoted in *New Existence*, Part V., p. lxvi.).

create permanent and substantial benefits to the inhabitants of the village, and to the proprietors of the Mills.”

The 31st December, 1813, four days after Owen's agreement with his new partners, was fixed on as the date for the sale by auction. In the interval the old partners had, according to Owen, spread rumours to depreciate the value of the property, hoping to be enabled to buy it in at much less than its real value, and supposing that Owen, of whose recent proceedings they appear to have been in ignorance, would be unable in any event to find the purchase-money. The property was put up at £60,000, Owen having arranged with his new friends not to let it go under £120,000. The price gradually mounted up, the old partners advancing by bids of £1,000 and Owen's solicitor capping each bid with an advance of £100. The persistence of Owen's representative seems to have disconcerted his opponents, for their final bid was £114,000, and the property was in the event knocked down to Owen at £114,100.¹

Owen dispatched a mounted messenger to carry the news to his wife at New Lanark, and a few days later, as soon as the necessary business formalities had been completed, followed himself with two of his new partners, Joseph Fox and Michael Gibbs.² The following extract

¹ Owen tells us that his late partners had made so sure of the victory that they had invited their friends to a dinner to celebrate it. At the dinner one of the guests, Colonel Hunter, knowing that his hosts had for weeks past been running down the value of the property, ironically proposed the toast of "Success to those who had sold for £114,100 a property which they had valued at £40,000 only" (*Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 92).

² See extracts from their letters, alluding to their reception at New Lanark, published in *New Existence*, Part. V., p. lxxvii.

from a letter published in the *Glasgow Herald* of January 10, 1814, describes the reception with which they met. The letter is dated Lanark, January 5, 1814.

“There were great rejoicings here yesterday on account of Mr. Owen’s return, after his purchase of New Lanark. The Society of Free Masons at this place, with colours flying and a band of music, accompanied by almost the whole of the inhabitants, met Mr. Owen, immediately before his entrance into the burgh of Lanark, and hailed him with the loudest acclamations of joy; his people took the horses from his carriage and, a flag being placed in front, drew him and his friends along, amid the plaudits of the surrounding multitudes, until they reached Braxfield, where his Lady and two of her sisters being prevailed upon to enter the carriage, which was then uncovered, the people with the most rapturous exultation proceeded to draw them through all the streets of New Lanark, where all were eager to testify their joy at his return. On being set down at his own house, Mr. Owen, in a very appropriate speech, expressed his acknowledgements to his people for the warmth of their attachment, when the air was again rent with the most enthusiastic bursts of applause. Mr. Owen is so justly beloved by all the inhabitants employed at New Lanark, and by people of all ranks in the neighbourhood, that a general happiness has been felt since the news arrived of his continuing a proprietor of the mills. The houses were all illuminated at New Lanark on Friday¹ night when the news came, and all has been jubilee and animation with them ever since.”

¹ December 31, 1813.

It was not only Owen's own workpeople who took part in this demonstration : the inhabitants of the town of Old Lanark insisted on testifying their respect and admiration for their neighbour by joining the crowd and helping to draw the carriage through the streets. His Quaker friends, Owen tells us, were much alarmed at the first moment when they saw the multitude running towards them on their nearing the town of Lanark, and afterwards proportionately pleased with the affection and gratitude manifested by the people.¹ Owen himself, we are told, warmly expostulated with those who proposed to harness themselves to his carriage, protesting that the working classes had already too long been treated like the brutes.²

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 97.

² *Robert Owen at New Lanark*, p. 16.

CHAPTER VI

A NEW VIEW OF SOCIETY

THE name of Robert Owen is little known to the present generation as an educational reformer. We find scant mention of him in Encyclopædia articles on Education or in histories of pedagogy. Yet whether we look at the soundness and novelty of his theories, the magnitude of the results actually achieved, or the measure of his reputation and influence amongst his contemporaries, we are justified in awarding him a high place amongst the pioneers of popular education. There are two main causes for the undeserved oblivion which has fallen on this, not the least fruitful and significant part of his life's work. In the first place, Owen published no formal treatise on pedagogy, unless indeed his *Essays on the Formation of Character* may be classed in that category ; he did not even find time to write a systematic account of the scheme of education actually pursued in the New Lanark schools, nor did any of his contemporaries, with one exception, think it worth while to supply the omission. The only comprehensive account which we possess is to be found in a small book written by his son, Robert Dale Owen, in 1824, which seems to have attracted, in this country at any rate, less notice than it deserved.

But the main cause for the rapid passing into oblivion of Owen's work in this direction is, no doubt, to be found in his own later history. It was the ambiguous reputation of Owen the Socialist, Owen the Infidel, and Owen the Spiritualist which eclipsed the fame of Owen the founder of Infant-schools, and the pioneer in this country of rational education.

The education of the children of the poor was possibly more neglected in England at the beginning of the last century than in any other civilised country. The piety of former generations had endowed numerous Grammar Schools for giving a liberal education to the children of the well-to-do. Throughout the eighteenth century a large number of charity schools had been founded to teach the children of the poor to read and write. But even the beggarly elements offered by these charity schools were available only for a few. The buildings could accommodate but a fraction of those who needed their help. There was no one to make the teaching offered attractive, or in default of such attraction to compel the children to come. Moreover the parents themselves were in many cases unwilling or unable to forego their children's earnings. A large proportion therefore of the children of this country could neither read nor write. So late as 1816 the Committee on the Education of the Lower Orders in the Metropolis, presided over by Henry Brougham, concluded "that a very large number of children are wholly without the means of instruction, although their parents appear to be generally very desirous of obtaining that advantage for them." Owen's partner William Allen, one of the witnesses before the Committee, estimated the number of children

in London alone at that date who were wholly without education at over 100,000. The Lancastrian Association had organised an actual census in two districts of London. In the Covent Garden division they found that out of 4,790 children, 2,748 were wholly uneducated. The result of a similar census in Spitalfields showed that out of 5,953 children, there were 2,565 between six and fourteen years of age without any education.¹ These figures applied to London alone. There was no reason to suppose that things were better in the rest of England; and in the manufacturing districts, where, as already shown, the whole energies of the children were devoted from an early age to winning their bread, the amount of education must have been almost infinitesimal.

The Committee of 1816 was appointed as the result of a long period of popular ferment on this question of education. From the beginning of the nineteenth century both parties in the State had been in strenuous rivalry to found schools in the interest of their own views and so capture the growing generation. The Liberals and Nonconformists were first in the field. A young Quaker named Lancaster, filled with zeal for the education of the people, had begun in 1798 to teach some poor children near his father's home in Southwark. As his pupils grew in numbers he acted upon a plan already formulated by Dr. Bell, an army chaplain at Madras, and set his pupils to teach each other. By this means he soon gathered nearly a thousand pupils at his school. The problem of popular education at an inexpensive rate seemed already solved. The Noncon-

¹ *Report*, pp. 36, 189.

formists and the reforming party generally took up Lancaster's scheme with enthusiasm, and the Royal Lancastrian Association, afterwards known as the British and Foreign Schools Society, was founded.

Amongst the most influential of Lancaster's early patrons were some wealthy members of the Society of Friends, under whose guidance the Bible was regularly read and studied in the schools. But the Church party, not satisfied with this undenominational instruction, supported Dr. Bell, the original inventor of the monitorial system, and founded in opposition "The National Society for the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church." Both parties collected funds and established schools through the country. It does not appear, however, that either Bell or Lancaster aimed at any radical reform, beyond that already mentioned for cheapening the machinery of popular education. Reading, writing, and arithmetic still formed the staple of the course, and these elements were still taught by crude mechanical methods which exercised the memory at the expense of the judgment and reasoning powers.

The main object aimed at by both reformers was necessarily economy. It was economy which suggested to Bell setting the elder children to teach the younger, and the use of sand instead of writing-paper. Lancaster adopted both devices, but at a later date substituted slates for sand. Both systems made large use of a blackboard for giving instruction. Reading, writing and arithmetic lessons seem commonly to have been given *viva voce*, the pupil writing the problem down on the slate from dictation, or copying it from the

blackboard—the expense of books for each scholar was thus saved.

Lancaster is credited with the invention of syllabic spelling and some minor reforms. But both his contributions and those of Dr. Bell to the art of education seem to have been for the most part of a mechanical kind.¹

It should be added that the plan, essential to the proper carrying out of the monitorial scheme, of having a large number of classes carried on simultaneously under the director's eye in one large room, though no doubt economical, necessarily tended to impair efficiency. Owen, who originally planned the arrangement of his own schools at New Lanark somewhat on this model, had come later to regret his action; for, as his son points out, experience soon showed that it was difficult to gain and fix the attention of the children when a number of separate centres of instruction were carrying on business simultaneously in an immense room ninety feet by forty.

Owen had at an early period given generous assistance to both Lancaster and Bell. To the first he had sent subscriptions amounting in all to a thousand pounds. Later, when the Church party took up Dr. Bell, he had offered them a similar sum if they would open their schools without distinction of creed, and £500 if they

¹ See *A Comparative View of the Plans of Education of Dr. Bell and Mr. Lancaster*, by Joseph Fox, 1808; and *Address in Recommendation of the Madras System of Education*, by Rev. N. J. Hollingsworth, London, 1812. William Allen, before Brougham's Committee, estimated the cost of conducting a school of 1,000 children on the Lancastrian plan at only 4s. 6d. a head. He mentions also that both Bell and Lancaster made one book serve for the whole school (*Report*, p. 115).

refused to accept the condition. After some debate, as Owen tells us, the smaller sum was accepted.¹

In 1812 Lancaster came to Glasgow and Owen took the chair at a public dinner given in his honour. In a brief speech he maintained the thesis that education, "so far at least as depends upon our operations, is the primary source of all the good and evil, misery and happiness, which exist in the world." For consider, said he, the differences, bodily and mental, which are found between different races of mankind, and different individuals in the same race. "From whence do these general bodily and mental differences proceed? Are they inherent in our nature, or do they arise from the respective soils on which we are born? Evidently from neither. They are wholly and solely the effects of that education which I have described. Man becomes a wild ferocious savage, a cannibal, or a highly civilised and benevolent being, according to the circumstances in which he may be placed from his birth."

"Let us suppose," he proceeded, "an exchange of any given number of children to be made at their birth between the Society of Friends, of which our worthy guest, Joseph Lancaster, is a member, and the loose fraternity which inhabit St. Giles's in London; the children of the former would grow up like the members of the latter, prepared for every degree of crime, while those of the latter would become the same temperate good moral characters as the former."¹ How momentous in its consequences for good or evil, he concluded, is the work of educating the youth of the nation.

The passage contains two assumptions, each of which

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 84; Hollingsworth, *op. cit.*

would in modern times be held as highly controvertible—that the differences between man and man are due to differences in the environment, and that the conditions of the environment are directly under human control. These assumptions, expressed or understood, informed, it need scarcely be pointed out, the advanced political thinking of the last half, at least, of the eighteenth century. They are implied in the *Contrat Social*; they justified the paper constitution of the Abbe Sieyès; they form the basis of the argument in Tom Paine's *Rights of Man* and in Godwin's *Political Justice*; they are embodied in the American Declaration of Independence; nay, they are the unwritten postulates on which Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity ultimately rest. They found qualified expression in the writings even of so sober and representative a thinker as Adam Smith: "The difference of natural talents in different men is in reality much less than we are aware of: and the very different genius which appears to distinguish men of different professions when grown up to maturity, is not, upon many occasions, so much the cause as the effect of the division of labour. The difference between the most dissimilar characters, between a philosopher and a common street porter, for example, seems to arise, not so much from nature as from habit, custom and education. When they came into the world, and for the first six or eight years of their existence, they were very much alike, and neither their parents nor their playfellows could perceive any remarkable difference. About that age or soon after, they come to be employed in very different occupations. The difference of talents comes then to be taken notice of, and widens by degrees, till

at last the vanity of the philosopher is willing to acknowledge scarce any resemblance."¹

These conceptions, then, were more or less taken for granted in much of the literature of the closing decade of the eighteenth century, and Owen drank them in at the most impressionable period of his intellectual life, the years between 18 and 28, which he spent in Manchester. That he read and studied at all systematically is improbable. We have seen that his school education ceased before he was ten years of age. But by his own account he was an eager reader of books both before and after that date. He tells us that his hours of leisure at Stamford were mostly devoted to reading. When he came to Manchester his leisure was no doubt more scanty;² and his writings show little trace of wide, much less of systematic reading.

His son's account fully accords with this view: "When I first remember him, he read a great deal, but it was chiefly one or two London dailies, with other periodicals as they came out. He was not, in any sense of the word, a student; one who made his own way in life, unaided by a single dollar from the age of ten, could not well be. I never found in his extensive library a book with a marginal note, or even a pencil mark of his, on a single page. He usually glanced over books without mastering them; often dismissing them with some such curt remark as that 'the radical errors shared by all men made books of little value.' Except statistical works, of which his favourite was Colquhoun's 'Resources of the British Empire,' I never remember

¹ *Wealth of Nations*, Book. I., Chap. iv.

² But see above, Chap. iii., p. 55.

to have seen him occupied in taking notes from any book whatever.

“In this way he worked out his problems for human improvement to great disadvantage, missing a thousand things that great minds had thought and said before his time, and often mistaking ideas that were truly his own, for novelties that no human being had heretofore given to the world.”¹

Owen thus got his ideas, as a self-educated man, with little leisure for study, must do, from few, and those mostly secondhand, sources. And he has the characteristic defects of the self-educated thinker. His conceptions are presented with a crudity and sharpness of definition impossible for one who had continually supplemented his own scanty store of observations and reflections out of the accumulated riches of the past.

His ideas were no doubt already belated even at the time when he wrote. In his exaggeration of the importance of circumstances—that is, post-natal circumstances—in forming character, he is guided by the bias of the eighteenth century thinkers. But the reaction against the pre-Revolutionary philosophy had set in long before 1813: and the great conception of evolution was even then dawning upon the world. Charles Darwin, it is appropriate to remember, was born just four years before the publication of the first *Essay on the Formation of Character*, Buffon, Goethe, Erasmus Darwin had already written, and Lamarck was at the time struggling with his speculations on the origin of species. It is certain, apart from these great names, that the plain facts of inheritance, though not, of course,

¹ *Threading my Way*, p. 67.

bulking so largely as in modern thought, were even then recognised as counting for much more than Owen apparently had ever imagined. It is not that he deliberately sets facts of this kind on one side, but that he does not apparently recognise their bearing on his argument. His mind was dominated by the one idea, and held it in naked simplicity, which admitted neither deduction nor qualification.

Again, it is to be remarked that his first years at New Lanark shut him off to a great extent from such intercourse with educated men as he had enjoyed at Manchester ; and the extraordinary success of his efforts for the regeneration of the miniature society over which he exercised lordship confirmed and hardened his views that Man was the creature of circumstance, and the reconstruction of the world, when this novel truth was firmly grasped, a mere question of the adaptation of means to ends. So that he puts forward his theories with the uncompromising directness of a child, and with more than a child's self-confidence.

Some time in 1812 Owen had published, anonymously, the pamphlet already referred to—*A Statement regarding the New Lanark Establishment*. During the same year he wrote his first "Essay on the Principle of the Formation of Human Character," and published it early in 1813 under the title of *A New View of Society*. The second Essay appeared at the end of the same year. Both were originally published anonymously. The third and fourth Essays, though written about the same time and circulated amongst a large number of persons eminent in the social and political world, were not published until July, 1816.

The key-note of the Essays is the proposition that “*Any general character, from the best to the worst, from the most ignorant to the most enlightened, may be given to any community, even to the world at large, by the application of proper means ; which means are to a great extent at the command and under the control of those who have influence in the affairs of men.*”¹ Thus by suitable training any standard of conduct and any belief, however elevating on the one hand, or absurd and injurious on the other, can be impressed upon a human being. “Children are without exception passive and wonderfully contrived compounds,” which can be moulded into any form at the pleasure of those who have control over them in the plastic stages of infancy and childhood. They are thus liable to be impressed, and as history shows us, always have received the impression of the habits, sentiments, and beliefs held by their parents and guardians, the impression being modified only by the circumstances in which they are placed and, to some small extent, by the particular organisation of each individual. From this it follows that no person is responsible for his own character and impulses, though the whole system of society and the whole doctrine of religion have assumed the contrary. No human being is properly the subject of praise or blame, still less of reward or punishment. Hence we may perceive the absurdity and glaring injustice of our penal laws : “How much longer shall we continue to allow generation after generation to be taught crime from their infancy, and, when so taught, hunt

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol I., p. 266. The Essays in their original form being now difficult to obtain, the references given in the present chapter are to the reprint of them included in the Appendix to the first volume of the *Autobiography*.



Two woodcuts from the 1834 reprint of Owen's *Essays on the Formation of the Human Character*, illustrating the effect of bad and good circumstances respectively.

them like beasts of the forest, until they are entangled beyond escape in the toils and nets of the law? when, if the circumstances of those poor unpitied sufferers had been reversed with those who are even surrounded with the pomp and dignity of justice, these latter would have been at the bar of the culprit, and the former would have been in the judgment seat.”¹

On the other hand, “the child who from infancy has been rationally instructed in these principles, will readily discover and trace *whence* the opinions and habits of his associates have arisen, and *why* they possess them. At the same age he will have acquired reason sufficient to exhibit to him forcibly the irrationality of being angry with an individual for possessing qualities which, as a passive being during the formation of those qualities, he had not the means of preventing.”² He will thus be moved to pity, not to anger, for those less fortunate in their upbringing than himself. A child so educated will be filled with a spirit of universal tolerance and good will; he will constantly desire to do good to all men, even to those who hold themselves his enemies. “Thus *shortly, directly, and certainly* may mankind be taught the essence, and to attain the ultimate object, of all former *moral and religious* instruction.”³

To Owen it seemed that these principles and their corollaries, when thus clearly stated, were almost self-evident. Nevertheless he appeals for corroborative evidence to the past history of every nation, and in particular relates in some detail the result of his own

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol. I., pp. 274, 275.

² *Ibid.*, p. 273.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

experiment at putting these principles into practice at New Lanark.

In the preface to the third Essay he makes an earnest appeal to manufacturers and other employers of labour, in their own interests no less than those of the nation at large, to follow his example. He points out that the difference between profit and loss in running a manufactory is commonly held to depend largely on the attention bestowed on the machinery and the proper condition of the plant: "If then," he continues, "due care as to the state of your inanimate machines can produce such beneficial results, what may not be expected if you devote equal attention to your vital machines, which are much more wonderfully constructed?"

"When you shall acquire a right knowledge of these, of their curious mechanism, of their self-adjusting powers; when the proper main-spring shall be applied to their varied movements,—you will become conscious of their real value, and you will readily be induced to turn your thoughts more frequently from your inanimate to your living machines; you will discover that the latter may be easily trained and directed to procure a large increase of pecuniary gain, while you may also derive from them high and substantial gratification.

"Will you then continue to expend large sums of money to procure the best devised mechanism of wood, brass, or iron; to retain it in perfect repair; to provide the best substance for the prevention of unnecessary friction, and to save it from falling into premature decay? Will you also devote years of intense application to understand the connection of the various parts

of these lifeless machines, to improve their effective powers, and to calculate with mathematical precision all their minute and combined movements? And when in these transactions you estimate time by minutes, and the money expended for the chance of increased gain by fractions, will you not afford some of your attention to consider whether a portion of your time and capital would not be more advantageously applied to improve your living machines? From experience which cannot deceive me, I venture to assure you, that your time and money so applied, if directed by a true knowledge of the subject, would return you, not five, ten, or fifteen per cent, for your capital so expended, but often fifty, and in many cases a hundred per cent.”¹

But it is to Governments rather than to individuals that Owen prefers to make his appeal. “On the experience of a life devoted to the subject, I hesitate not to say, that the members of any community may by degrees be trained to live *without idleness, without poverty, without crime, and without punishment*; for each of these is the effect of error in the various systems prevalent throughout the world. *They are all necessary consequences of ignorance.*”²

That ignorance removed, nothing, he proclaimed, forbids the immediate putting into effect of the principles here first set forth in their entirety to the world—“Shall yet another year pass in which crime shall be forced on the infant, who in ten, twenty, or thirty years hence shall suffer DEATH for being taught that crime? Surely it is impossible.”³ If such delay were permitted, it is

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol. I., pp. 260, 261.

² *Ibid.*, p. 285.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 286.

the makers of the law, and others in high places who ought to suffer the penalty of the misdeed, rather than the untrained or mistrained culprit.

In the fourth Essay, the sub-title of which runs, "The Principles of the Former Essays applied to Government," he indicates the measures which should be adopted to reconstruct human society on the basis of the New Views. The first step towards the introduction of the New System is the establishment of a national scheme of Education. That education must be universal; no child in the whole Empire should be excluded from its benefits. It should be unsectarian; though Owen would welcome the co-operation of the Church, and held indeed that such co-operation was essential to the smooth working of the scheme, he deprecated the teaching of theological dogmas. Lastly, the national education must be a real education, and not merely the teaching by rote of the beggarly elements. He briefly reviews the systems of education then on trial in the country—those of Bell, Lancaster, and Whitbread—and shows how far they fall short of the standard required.

"It must be evident to common observers, that children may be taught, by either Dr. Bell's or Mr. Lancaster's system, to read, write, account, and sew, and yet acquire the worst habits, and have their minds rendered irrational for life.

"Reading and writing are merely instruments by which knowledge, either true or false, may be imparted; and, when given to children, are of little comparative value, unless they are also taught how to make a proper use of them. . ." (p. 318). "Enter any of the schools denominated National, and request the master to show

the acquirements of the children. These are called out, and he asks them theological questions to which men of the most profound erudition cannot make a rational reply; the children, however, readily answer as they had been previously instructed; for memory, in this mockery of learning, is all that is required.

“Thus the child whose natural faculty of comparing ideas, or whose rational powers, shall be the soonest destroyed, if, at the same time, he possess a memory to retain incongruities without connexion, will become what is termed the first scholar in the class; and three-fourths of the time which ought to be devoted to the acquirement of useful instruction, will be really occupied in destroying the mental powers of the children” (p. 319).

But the remodelling of our institutions need not wait until the education of the rising generation on rational principles shall have been completed. There is much that an enlightened Government can do at once to improve the circumstances which hinder and oppress the men and women whose time for education is unhappily almost over. First a Labour Bureau should be established “for the purpose of obtaining regular and accurate information relative to the value of and demand for labour over the United Kingdoms” (p. 325); and “it ought to be a primary duty of any Government that sincerely interests itself in the well-being of its subjects, to provide perpetual employment of real national utility, in which all who apply may be immediately occupied” (p. 329). But Owen expressly disclaims interference with private enterprise: his Labour Bureau is to provide employment only for those otherwise unemployed. Such

employment he suggests will best be found in the making and repairing of the public highways; for, he points out, it would probably be true national economy to keep the roads in a much higher state of repair than had been the case up to that time. Should this source of employment prove insufficient, he suggests that the unemployed might be set to work to construct canals, harbours and docks, and even to build ships (p. 329).

These two, National Education and National Employment, are the principal and most urgent measures necessary to the policy. But amongst minor reforms Owen indicates the abolition of State Lotteries; the regulation of the drink traffic in the interests of the Nation; the reform and ultimate supersession of the Poor Laws. Lastly, the Church must be purged. The theological dogmas which "constitute its weakness and create its danger" must be "withdrawn"; all tests must be abolished, and all men invited again within the fold, so as to constitute once more a truly National Church. "For the first grand step towards effecting any substantial improvement in these realms, without injury to any part of the community, is to make it the clear and decided interest of the Church to co-operate cordially in all the projected ameliorations. Once found a National Church on the true, unlimited, and genuine principles of universal charity, and all the members of the State will soon improve in every truly valuable quality"¹ (p. 322).

¹ Arnold Toynbee held somewhat similar ideas on the need for making the Church truly national by abolishing all doctrinal tests, and securing the co-operation of clergy and laity. See the memoir prefixed to the *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution*, 1884.

In concluding, Owen indicates that there is yet one more instalment of the truth to be revealed when the time is ripe. "All that is now requisite, previous to withdrawing the last mental bandage by which hitherto the human race has been kept in darkness and misery, is by calm and patient reasoning to tranquillise the public mind, and thus prevent the evil effects which might otherwise arise from the too sudden prospect of freely enjoying rational liberty of mind" (p. 331).

In these words no doubt Owen foreshadowed his famous denunciation of all the religions of the world, which took place at the "London Tavern" in August, 1817.

Those who are familiar with the *Political Justice* will recognise a striking similarity, extending in some cases to the actual phrases employed, between Godwin's philosophical conceptions and those expounded by Owen twenty years later. Godwin had taught that "the characters of men originate in their external circumstances"; that "children are a sort of raw material put into our hands," to be moulded according to our wishes;¹ that, unlike the animals, in whose idiosyncrasies inheritance plays a large part, "the original differences of man and man . . . may be said to be almost nothing;"² "there is for the most part no essential difference between the child of the lord and of the porter":³ that the differences found to exist in after life are due partly to the accident of the environment, partly to formal education, partly to the educative influence of the political and social system; that man's character and destiny are therefore largely determined by causes directly under

¹ *Political Justice*, edition of 1798, Vol. I., p. 47.

² *Ibid.*, p. 43.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

human control. Again, Godwin ascribes all error to ignorance. "Remove the causes of this ignorance . . . and the effects will cease. Show me in the clearest and most unambiguous manner that a certain mode of procedure is most reasonable in itself or most conducive to my interests, and I shall infallibly pursue that mode."¹ Again, Godwin had taught that "the terms guilt, crime, desert and accountableness, in the absolute and general sense in which they have sometimes been applied, have no place. . . . So far as praise implies that the man could have abstained from the virtuous action I applaud, it belongs only to the delusive system of liberty."² If then "vicious propensities" have for the most part been implanted in human beings by "ill-constituted Governments," it would be absurd to hold the individuals responsible; "punishment can at no time make part of any political system that is built upon the principles of reason," and can at most be admitted as a measure of temporary expediency.³

The *Political Justice* first appeared in 1793, towards the beginning of Owen's residence in Manchester. The book can hardly have escaped his notice; and, though I cannot find that he ever mentions it by name, it seems tolerably certain that his philosophical views were profoundly influenced by its teachings. Doubtless in the twenty years which elapsed before the appearance of the *Essays on the Formation of Character*, Owen had so made these views his own by reflection and observation that he had forgotten whence his inspiration may have been derived. But if, as seems probable, he owed much to

¹ *Political Justice*, edition of 1798, Vol. I., p. 45. ² *Ibid.*, pp. 394, 395.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II., pp. 361-63.

Godwin, he was at any rate no servile follower of that curiously passionless thinker. On the constructive side of his speculations Owen parted company with his master. Godwin would have had no Government interference, no State employment of labour, no national system even of education: and he would assuredly have shuddered at the idea of co-operation with the Church.

But there are indications that another influence than Godwin's was working upon Owen at the time of the writing of the Essays. Owen's subsequent publications are commonly characterised by tediousness and monotony. Mr. Holyoake has somewhere illustrated this later style by a felicitous simile. Alluding to the well-known saying that Montaigne's sentences were so alive that if pricked they would bleed, he remarks that if you tried to prick one of Owen's utterances on the "System" you would infallibly lose your needle in the cotton-wool. But in these earliest Essays we find a certain crispness and clearness of style. The fourth Essay in particular gives us much more than this. Up to this point Owen had dealt mainly with the exposition of the general principles on which his "System" is based, and with the account of his work at New Lanark. But in the last Essay he presents us with a comprehensive and clearly reasoned scheme of social reconstruction. The argument is marked by studied moderation of tone, sobriety of judgment, and considerable insight into political possibilities. The whole composition reaches a higher level than any of Owen's other utterances. The explanation is probably to be found in a visit which Owen, prior to the publication of the Essays, paid to

Francis Place, the radical tailor of Charing Cross. Owen sought Place's aid in correcting the MS., and from internal evidence it is probable that Place's hand helped to guide the pen, at any rate in the writing of this final Essay.¹

Place, writing in 1836, gives a shrewd and not unkindly account of his visitor. Owen "introduced himself to me, and I found him a man of kind manners and good intentions, of an imperturbable temper, and an enthusiastic desire to promote the happiness of mankind. A few interviews made us friends. . . He told me he possessed the means, and was resolved to produce a great change in the manners and habits of the whole of the people, from the most exalted to the most depressed. He found all our institutions at variance with the welfare and happiness of the people, and had discovered the true means of correcting all those errors which prevented their having the fullest enjoyment possible, and consequently of being wise and happy. His project was simple, easy of adoption, and so plainly efficacious that it must be embraced by every thinking man the moment he was made to understand it. He produced a manuscript, which he requested me to read and correct for him. I went through it carefully, and it was afterwards printed. . . . Mr. Owen then was, and is still, persuaded that he was the first who had ever observed that man was the creature of circumstances. On this supposed discovery he founded his system. Never having read a metaphysical book, nor held a metaphysical conversation, nor having ever heard of the

¹ James Mill is said also to have assisted in the revision of the MSS. (see Holyoake's *History of Co-operation* (First edition), Vol. I., p. 57).

disputes respecting free-will and necessity, he had no clear conception of his subject and his views were obscure. Yet he had all along been preaching and publishing and projecting and predicting in the fullest conviction that he could command circumstances or create them, and place man above their control when necessary. He never was able to explain these absurd notions, and therefore always required assent to them, telling those who were not willing to take his words on trust that it was their ignorance which prevented them from assenting to these self-evident propositions.”¹

We cannot but recognise the essential justice and sanity, within its limits, of Place's criticism, even whilst we feel that it fails to mete out full justice to Owen's character, and to recognise one supreme quality in which the critic, more nearly perhaps than any other man then living, resembled the man upon whom he passed judgment. Born in the same year, trained in the same stern school—though Owen's education there lacked the completeness which years of adversity had given to Place's character—inheritors, even though one of them never realised his debt, of the same great traditions, political, religious, and philosophic, Francis Place and Robert Owen alike excelled by reason of their untiring faith in the possibilities of human progress. This faith was the motive-power of both lives until the end. But in Place it was guided and subordinated by an intellect of rare quality, which was quick to see and resolute to use the small occasions which presented themselves from day to day for building up the gradual edifice of

¹ From the Place MSS. in the British Museum, 27, 791 (264-68), quoted in the *Life of Francis Place*, by Graham Wallas, pp. 63, 64.

national freedom. With Owen that faith burned generous and uncontrollable as the sun, and like the sun, most of its light and heat might seem to have run to waste. If the realised achievements of the one man are weighed against those of the other, the higher rank would perhaps be assigned to Francis Place. But perhaps the other's claim to our remembrance lies less in the things which he did—substantial though his achievements were—than in the hopes which he inspired, the faith which his example kept alive. For the sun of that faith was never shorn of a single ray, nor suffered even a momentary eclipse. When he published his *New View of Society*, he looked for the regeneration of the world to begin on the morrow: throughout his long life that high vision, ever receding as he advanced, was still before his eyes: and he died at the age of eighty-seven happy in the belief that the millennium was even then knocking at the door.

The publication of the first two Essays, together with the growing fame of his work at New Lanark, brought Owen's name prominently before the public, and was the means of introducing him to many of the leading men of the day. He had an interview with Lord Liverpool, the Prime Minister, who introduced him to Lady Liverpool, that she might express to Owen her warm approval of the Essays. Lord Sidmouth, then Home Secretary, not content with expressing his own sympathy, undertook to circulate the privately printed edition containing the two later Essays amongst the Governments and learned bodies of Europe and America. The Archbishop of Canterbury (Sutton) invited him to Lambeth that Owen might read to him the two

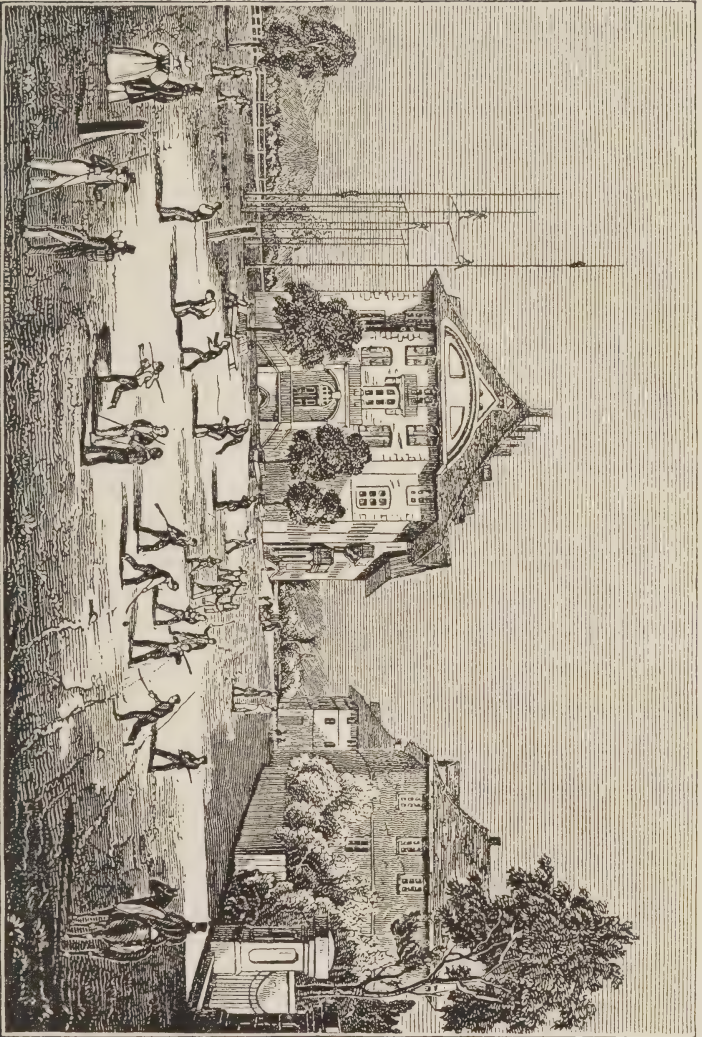
later Essays whilst still in MS., and afterwards, Owen tells us, expressed a desire to correspond with their author, that he might hear more of the subject. Amongst his other acquaintances of this time were the Archbishop of Armagh, several bishops, Clarkson, Wilberforce, Zachary Macaulay, Sir Thomas Bernard and other philanthropists, Malthus, James Mill, Ricardo, Sir James Mackintosh, Colonel Torrens, Place, and Godwin. A copy of the Essays even reached Napoleon in his retirement at Elba, and Owen expresses his belief that the destinies of Europe might have been changed if the Allied Sovereigns had allowed the Exile to return peaceably to his throne, and thence carry into effect the good resolutions with which the *New View of Society* had inspired him.

Owen's account of all these interviews and transactions was written in extreme old age, and details with the naïve vanity of second childhood the gracious speeches and compliments made to him by these eminent personages. It is difficult to take his account of the matter quite seriously, or to suppose that either the Archbishop or the Home Secretary set so high a value on these revelations and proposals for social reconstruction as Owen would have us believe. But apart altogether from natural courtesy, it is probable that Owen's unaffected sincerity, the goodwill to all mankind which radiated from him, and the knowledge of the great things which he had already done at New Lanark, drew men towards him, and made them welcome one who must have proved merely a colossal bore if he had not been, as Leslie Stephen has finely said, of the very salt of the earth.

CHAPTER VII

THE NEW LANARK SCHOOLS

FROM what has been said in the last chapter it will appear that it would be unprofitable to enquire too closely how far originality can be claimed for Owen's system of education. Ultimately, no doubt, like all other educational reformers since the French Revolution, he derived his inspiration from Rousseau, or from the movement of thought of which Rousseau is the most conspicuous embodiment. The general similarity of his ideas with those of Rousseau and of Rousseau's most prominent disciple, Pestalozzi, leave no room for doubt on this point. But the debt on Owen's part was probably unrecognised. There is no allusion to Rousseau in any of his writings; he no doubt drank in the Genevan prophet's ideas at second-hand, and was ignorant even at the time of their source. Of Pestalozzi he does not seem to have heard until he went, in 1818, to the Continent in company with Professor Pictet, and there visited the schools of Oberlin at Fribourg, of Fellenberg at Hofwyl, and of Pestalozzi himself at Yverdun. Owen warmly approved "the truly catholic spirit" in which Oberlin conducted his school for the children of the poor. But he seems to have taken much pains to demonstrate to the good Father the imperative necessity



From a woodcut in the "Saturday Magazine", Dec., 1834, by permission of the Charity Organisation Society.

M. FELLENERG'S CHIEF SCHOOL, AT HOFWYL.

of taking children whilst still in their earliest years, for, said he, "to a great extent the character is made or marred before children enter the usual schoolroom."¹ Owen was obviously unaware when, in his extreme old age, he wrote his account of this visit to Fribourg, that Oberlin had anticipated him by some forty years in founding infant schools. In the early years of his pastorate in the Ban de la Roche, Oberlin had established such a school, with young women to act as *conductrices*. The children were taken at a quite tender age, when too young for formal lessons, were made to sit on forms, and taught to knit, spin, and sew, or to look at pictures of sacred subjects. They were especially—a significant foreshadowing of one of Owen's favourite devices—taught to interest themselves in maps, amongst them a large scale-map of the Ban de la Roche, in which each child learnt to find its father's house. The children were further taught to recite short lessons after the teachers.²

With Fellenberg's establishment, which they next visited in the course of this tour, Owen was so pleased that a few months later he sent his two elder boys, Robert Dale and William, to be educated there. But the impression produced by the Yverdun School was not so favourable. Here is his own account of the visit :

"Our next visit was to Yverdun, to see the advance made by Pestalozzi—another good and benevolent man, acting for the benefit of his poor children to the extent of his knowledge and means. He was doing, he said,

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 175.

² *Vie d'Oberlin* (Paris, 1845), p. 117.

all he could to cultivate the heart, the head, and the hands of his pupils. His theory was good, but his means and experience were very limited, and his principles were those of the old system. His language was a confused *patois*, which Professor Pictet could but imperfectly understand. His goodness of heart and benevolence of intention were evident in what he had done under the disadvantages which he had to encounter. His school, however, was one step in advance of ordinary schools, or the old routine schools for the poor in common society, and we were pleased with it as being this one step in advance, for the rudiments of common school education for the poor, without attention to their dispositions and habits, and without teaching them useful occupation, by which to earn a living, are of little real utility. We left him, being much pleased with the honest homely simplicity of the old man. His one step beyond the usual routine had attracted and was attracting the attention of many who had previously known only the common routine."

Pestalozzi throughout his life had been hampered by narrow means and by his own lack of organising power, and Owen's visit came just at the darkest hour for the old man. The Institute at Yverdun was then in great financial straits; owing to jealousies among the staff, the majority of Pestalozzi's disciples and colleagues and a large number of pupils had already left the school, or were about to leave; and Pestalozzi himself was almost in despair. Owen's unfavourable impression was therefore, no doubt, superficially justified. Nevertheless it is probable that he derived some useful ideas from the visit. And indeed the germs of many

of Owen's ideas on education were no doubt derived from his tour in 1818. A hostile witness already quoted, the Rev. John Aiton, says, "His mode of education is a jumble of Dr. Bell's and Mr. Lancaster's with hints from M. Fellenberg, Père Girard, Pestalozzi and others."¹ Owen himself in 1816—shortly before the Continental tour just described—was not disposed to claim originality for his ideas. In the evidence before the Factory Committee he is content to describe his educational system as "a combination of what appears to me the best parts of the National and Lancasterian systems, with some little additions which have suggested themselves."² But in this matter Owen appears to have "buildded wiser than he knew." He can have owed but little to either Bell or Lancaster. He distrusted the system of teaching by rote, and he regarded it as essential that the children should have more of the individual attention of the master than was possible under the monitorial system.³ Owen's educational ideas were certainly far in advance of his contemporaries in these islands, and his enterprise at New Lanark deserves to be commemorated as furnishing a model in some respects too far in advance of the time to be generally adopted even now.

It was not, however, until 1816—the year which saw the beginning of Froebel's work at Griesheim and Brougham's Select Committee on Education in this country—that Owen was able to carry out his ideas

¹ *A Refutation of Mr. Owen's System*, p. 11.

² See his evidence (*Report*, p. 26). See also the fuller statement of his system given by him before Lord Brougham's Committee of the same year (p. 238).

³ See his evidence before Lord Brougham's Committee (pp. 238 242).

on a liberal scale. Up till 1813 all his schemes for the improvement of the people at New Lanark had to be adjusted to meet the views of partners who were mainly intent on money-getting. Nevertheless he had, as already stated, succeeded prior to the dissolution of partnership in erecting, at a cost of £3,000, a building of three storeys, which was to serve amongst other purposes for schools and lectures. After 1813, with the cordial goodwill and assistance of his Quaker partners, Owen set to work to put up a new building to be used exclusively for school classes, lectures, concerts and recreation generally. The building was formally opened on January 1, 1816. In an address of considerable length, mercifully broken by a brief musical interlude, Owen expounded the views already set forth in his *Essays on the Formation of Character*, dwelling especially on the importance of right education from the earliest years as a means to the regeneration of mankind. "What ideas," he said, "individuals may attach to the term Millennium, I know not; but I know that society may be formed so as to exist without crime, without poverty, with health greatly improved, with little, if any, misery, and with intelligence and happiness increased a hundred-fold; and no obstacle whatsoever intervenes at this moment, except ignorance, to prevent such a state of society from becoming universal."¹

The Institution for the Formation of Character is still standing; it is the only one of the mill buildings on the hither side of the lade which brings the water from the river to work the mills. It is a building of

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 349.

two storeys; the lower storey is at the present time used as kitchens and dining-room for the mill-hands, and one room on the upper floor is fitted up as a concert hall and lecture-room. Until the establishment of Board Schools in Scotland, the building continued to be used as a school for the children of those working in the mills.

The upper floor, in Owen's time, was divided into two rooms, one about ninety and the other between forty and fifty feet long. The breadth is about forty¹ and the height twenty feet. To quote Robert Dale Owen's description, written in 1824:

"The principal school-room is fitted up with desks and forms, on the Lancasterian plan, having a free passage down the centre of the room. It is surrounded, except at one end, where a pulpit stands, with galleries, which are convenient when this room is used, as it frequently is, either as a lecture-room or place of worship.

"The other and smaller apartment on the second floor has the walls hung round with representations of the most striking zoological and mineralogical specimens, including quadrupeds, birds, fishes, reptiles, insects, shells, minerals, etc. At one end there is a gallery, adapted for the purpose of an orchestra, and at the other end are hung very large representations of the two hemispheres; each separate country, as well as the various seas, islands, etc., being differently coloured, but without any names attached to them. This room is used as a lecture- and ball-room, and it is here that

¹ According to Robert Dale Owen (*Education at New Lanark*, p. 28) my own measurements make it nearly forty-five.

the dancing and singing lessons are daily given. It is likewise occasionally used as a reading-room for some of the classes.

“The lower storey is divided into three apartments, of nearly equal dimensions, twelve feet high, and supported by hollow iron pillars, serving at the same time as conductors in winter for heated air, which issues through the floor of the upper storey, and by which means the whole building may, with care, be kept at any required temperature. It is in these three apartments that the younger classes are taught reading, natural history, and geography.”

The whole of the building was opened in the evenings for the use of children and adults who had been working in the mills during the day; further, there were in the evenings periodical singing and dancing classes, lectures, etc.

The clearest account of the system of infant education pursued at New Lanark is given by Owen himself.

The Infant School was, he tells us, opened on January 2, 1816.¹ All children above a year old² were, if the parents were willing, to be sent to the school. Owen himself during the first few months of its establishment was constantly in the schools, and took pains to win the confidence and affection of all the children. The selection of teachers for the infants had exercised him much; he felt it would be worse than useless to take persons whose only ideas of education

¹ *New Existence*, Part V., p. liii.

² In practice it would seem from occasional references that a somewhat higher limit was observed.

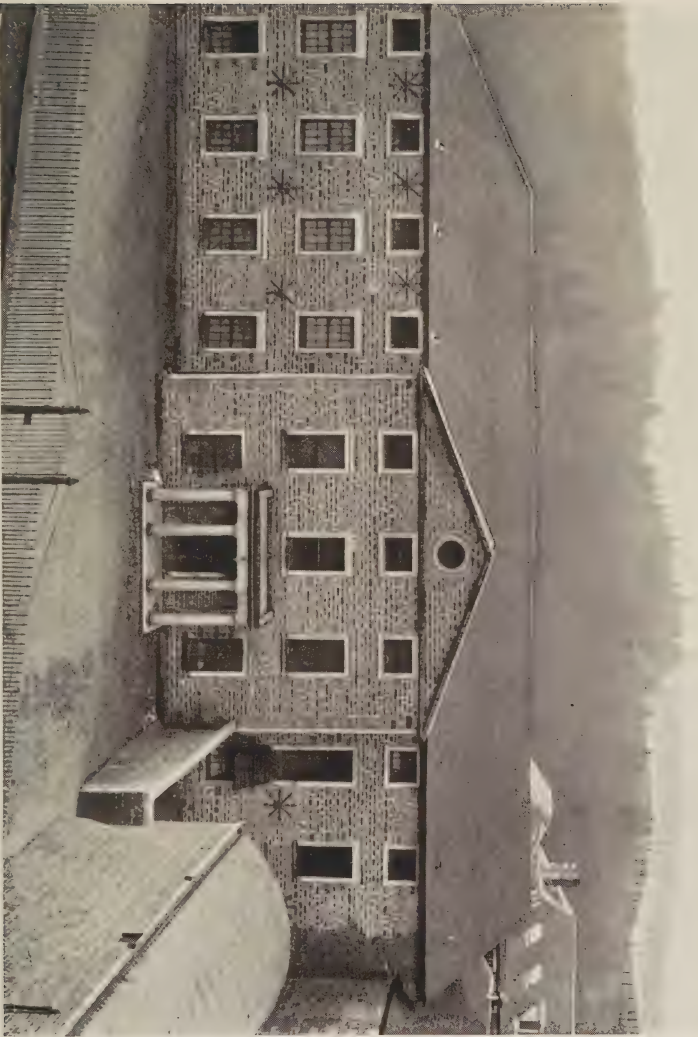


Photo by Davidson & Sons, New Lanark.

INSTITUTION FOR THE FORMATION OF CHARACTER, NEW LANARK.

were concerned with books. He needed those who loved children and would have unlimited patience with them, and who would moreover be willing unreservedly to follow Owen's instructions as regards the things to be taught and the methods of teaching. His choice finally fell upon one James Buchanan, a simple-hearted weaver, who is happily described as having been "previously trained by his wife to perfect submission to her will." With him was joined a young woman of seventeen, named Molly Young. Owen found in these persons sufficiently pliant instruments of his designs. His first instruction to them was never on any provocation to use harsh words or actions to the children. Further, whilst showing in themselves an example of uniform kindness, they were to endeavour by every means in their power to inculcate a like spirit of loving kindness in the children in all their dealings with each other.

"The children," he proceeds, "were not to be annoyed with books; but were to be taught the uses and nature or qualities of the common things around them, by familiar conversation when the children's curiosity was excited so as to induce them to ask questions respecting them. . . . The schoolroom for the infants' instruction was . . . furnished with paintings, chiefly of animals, with maps, and often supplied with natural objects from the gardens, fields, and woods,—the examination and explanation of which always excited their curiosity and created an animated conversation between the children and their instructors, now themselves acquiring new knowledge by attempting to instruct their young friends, as I always taught

them to think their pupils were, and to treat them as such.

“The children at four and above that age showed an eager desire to understand the use of the maps of the four quarters of the world upon a large scale purposely hung in the room to attract their attention. Buchanan, their master, was first taught their use, and then how to instruct the children for their amusement—for with these infants everything was made to be amusement.

“It was most encouraging and delightful to see the progress which these infants and children made in real knowledge, without the use of books. And when the best means of instruction or forming character shall be known, I doubt whether books will be ever used before children attain their tenth year. And yet without books they will have a superior character formed for them at ten.

“After some short time,” he proceeds, the infants subjected to this training, “were unlike all children of such situated parents, and indeed unlike the children of any class in society. Those at two years of age and above had commenced dancing lessons, and those of four years of age and upwards singing lessons—both under a good teacher. Both sexes were also drilled, and became efficient in the military exercises, being formed into divisions, led by young drummers and fifers, and they became very expert and perfect in these exercises.”¹

Of the general principles on which the scheme of education was founded, and of the methods employed in

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol I., pp. 140, 141.

the teaching of the older children—from about five to ten or twelve—a clear account is given by Robert Dale Owen in his *Outlines of the System of Education at New Lanark*, published at Glasgow in 1824. The system had then been at work for upwards of eight years—long enough to enable the results to be seen and weighed. On the other hand, the children were only in school for some five hours a day and were subject in family life “to the counteracting influence of an association with persons who had not received similar education.” Moreover the parents, though they were at liberty to leave their children at school until twelve years of age, generally withdrew them at ten, to send them into the mills. Even after they had begun full work in the mills, however, the children were at liberty to attend the evening schools, and most of them seem to have availed themselves of the privileges offered. The education, it should be noted, was practically free, the parents being required to contribute only 3*d.* a month for each child—a sum insufficient, it may be surmised, to pay for the consumption of books, ink, and paper.¹

Prior to the shortening of the hours of work, the average attendance at the evening schools was less than one hundred a night. But after the reduction on January 1, 1816, from eleven and three-quarters to ten and three-quarter hours a day, the attendance rose rapidly. The average was 380 a night in January, 1816, 386 in February, and 396 in March. The following

¹ The actual cost of the schools in 1816 was £700 a year, viz. £550 for salaries of a Head Master and ten assistants, and £150 for lighting, heating, and materials. (Evidence given before Lord Brougham's Committee, p. 241.) But this does not include rent and maintenance,

table gives the distribution of the scholars by age and sex :

| | | <i>From the General Register.</i> | | | | |
|-----------|-------|-----------------------------------|------|---------|---|--|
| | | AGE. | DAY. | EVENING | TOTAL. | |
| Boys ... | 3-6 | 41 | | 145 | } Preparatory class. Reading, writing, arithmetic, music, dancing, and military exercises. | |
| | 6-10 | 104 | | | | |
| | 10-15 | ... | 124 | | | |
| | 15-20 | ... | 49 | | | |
| | 20-25 | ... | 1 | | | |
| Girls ... | 3-6 | 39 | | 174 | } Preparatory class. Reading, writing, arithmetic, sewing, dancing, and music. | |
| | 6-10 | 90 | | | | |
| | 10-15 | ... | 220 | | | |
| | 15-20 | ... | 52 | | | |
| | 20-25 | ... | 39 | | | |
| | | 274 | 485 | 759 | Average attendance, 622 daily. ¹ | |

The general principle underlying the whole of the New Lanark system was the exclusion of all artificial rewards or punishments. Owen held that such artificial incentives to action are harmful as disguising the operation of natural and social laws, substituting false ideals and erroneous notions of the world, and generally leaving the character weak and unstable when the artificial system ceases to operate. There were at New Lanark no prizes for industry or good conduct ; no child was punished for idleness or disobedience. The scholars were taught to find the best incentive to industry in the pleasure of learning, and in the spirit of innocent emulation which springs naturally when children are learning in company ; amiability and good conduct

¹ Report of Factory Committee of 1816, pp. 40, 66, 91, 92.

brought their own reward in the friendly feeling which they called forth in response both from teachers and fellow-pupils ; and where everything was done in kindness, and all restraints were known to be reasonable, and most were imposed in the interests of the children themselves, there was little temptation to disobedience. Such at any rate was the theory on which the schools were governed ; and by the general testimony of those who saw the system in action, children so amiable and gentle were never seen before.

As regards the formal work of education, the object aimed at was to make every subject as attractive as possible ; to teach as much as possible by conversation and by maps, pictures, and natural objects ; and never to allow the attention to become wearied. With that end no lesson was allowed to exceed three-quarters of an hour in duration.

In deference to the wishes of the parents, the children began to learn reading at a very early age. Owen, in this following Rousseau, would have wished to defer such instruction until the children should have learnt to value the artificial signs of written language not for themselves, but as a means of wider knowledge. A great difficulty was to find books suited for the youthful readers. Miss Edgeworth's tales were judged to be among the best ; "but even those contain too much of praise and blame to admit of their being regarded as unexceptionable." Much use was made, too, of voyages and travels. These were illustrated by maps and interspersed with anecdotes, and the children were questioned on what they read, and were thus taught in all cases to look on the art of reading as a means to an end,

rather than as an end in itself. In deference, again, to the wishes of the parents, and of Owen's partners, the children at an early age were taught to read the Bible and the Catechism of the Scotch Church.

In writing, the same general principles were observed. The children as soon as possible deserted copies for current handwriting; and the sentences written were made wherever practicable to have some reference to their other studies, so as to retain their interest.

Arithmetic was at the outset taught on the plan generally adopted at that time in Scotland; but later, Dale Owen tells us, Pestalozzi's system of mental arithmetic was introduced.¹

But the characteristic feature of the system of education at New Lanark was the lecture on natural science, geography or history. The class attending these lectures would consist of forty or fifty children. The lecture would be illustrated, as far as the subject would admit, by maps, pictures, diagrams, etc., and occasionally adorned by moral lessons. The lecture would be short, so as not to weary the attention of the youthful audience; and the children would be questioned by the lecturer, and would be encouraged themselves to ask questions in turn.

In this manner the study of geography, to many of

¹ Pestalozzi's system was founded on sense-impression. The child learnt the elementary processes of arithmetic from a *Table of Units*, in which each unit was represented by a line. He was thus enabled to see the results of addition, subtraction, etc. In the same way he learnt to understand fractions by studying tables of squares, in which the squares were divided into two, three, or more equal parts. Their knowledge of figures being thus firmly based upon concrete sense-impressions, Pestalozzi's pupils are said to have attained extraordinary facility in mental arithmetic (see De Guimps's *Life of Pestalozzi*, translated by John Russell, 1890, pp. 230, 413, etc.).

the less favoured children of a later day the dreariest remembrance of their childhood, was made interesting and attractive by frequent reference to the large coloured maps hung on the walls, by descriptions of the natural scenery and climatic conditions of each region, of the inhabitants and their appearance, their dress, manners and customs, and mode of life. But the study of geography was also made to point with peculiar emphasis a valuable moral lesson. For—

“In this manner are circumstances which induce national peculiarities and national vices exhibited to them; and the question will naturally arise in their minds: ‘Is it not highly probable that we ourselves, had we lived in such a country, should have escaped neither its peculiarities, nor its vices—that we should have adopted the notions and prejudices there prevalent? In fact is it not evident that we might have been cannibals or Hindoos, just as the circumstances of our birth should have placed us in Hindostan, where the killing of an animal becomes a heinous crime; or amongst some savage tribe where to torture a fellow creature, and to feast on his dead body, is accounted a glorious action?’ A child who has once felt what the true answer to such a question must be, cannot remain uncharitable or intolerant.”¹

It was perhaps because of the moral significance thus made to attach to it, that the study of geography formed so prominent a part of the education at New Lanark, especially with the younger children. Here is Robert Owen’s account of the manner in which the study was pursued.

¹ *Outlines of Education at New Lanark*, p. 46.

“Their lessons in geography were no less amusing to the children themselves and interesting to strangers. At a very early age they were instructed in classes on maps of the four quarters of the world, and after becoming expert in a knowledge of these, all the classes were united in one large class- and lecture-room, to go through these exercises on a map of the world so large as almost to cover the end of the room. On this map were delineated the usual divisions of the best maps, except that there were no names of countries or cities or towns; but for the cities and towns were small but distinct circles to denote their places—the classes united for this purpose generally consisted of about one hundred and fifty, forming as large a circle as could be placed to see the map. A light white wand was provided, sufficiently long to point to the highest part of the map by the youngest child. The lesson commenced by one of the children taking the wand to point with. Then one of them would ask him to point to such a district, place, island, city, or town. This would be done generally many times in succession; but when the holder of the wand was at fault, and could not point to the place asked for, he had to resign the wand to his questioner, who had to go through the same process. This by degrees became most amusing to the children, who soon learned to ask for the least-thought-of districts and places that they might puzzle the holder of the wand, and obtain it from him. This was at once a good lesson for one hundred and fifty—keeping the attention of all alive during the lesson. The lookers-on were as much amused, and many as much instructed as the children, who thus at an early age became so efficient,

that one of our Admirals, who had sailed round the world, said he could not answer many of the questions which some of these children not six years old readily replied to, giving the places most correctly.”¹

Even in the study of history, ancient and modern, the same method was pursued, and the eye was called upon to aid the ear. “Seven large maps or tables, laid out on the principle of the Stream of Time, and which were originally purchased from Miss Whitwell, a lady who formerly conducted a respectable seminary in London, are hung round the spacious room. These being made of canvass, may be rolled up at pleasure. On the Streams, each of which is differently coloured, and represents a nation, are painted the principal events which occur in the history of those nations. Each century is closed by a horizontal line, drawn across the map. By means of these maps, the children are taught the outlines of Ancient and Modern History, with ease to themselves, and without being liable to confound different events, or different nations. On hearing of any two events, for instance, the child has but to recollect the situation on the tables of the paintings, by which those are represented, in order to be furnished at once with their chronological relation to each other. If the events are contemporary, he will instantly perceive it.”²

In addition to the formal literary education described, the children were taught to sing and to dance, and were drilled in a few simple military evolutions. It was these exercises, which formed part of the daily education of the children from their earliest years,

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 144.

² *Outline of the System of Education at New Lanark*, p. 50.

which most impressed the visitors to New Lanark, as will be seen from the extracts quoted below. The children, it should be added, were given a distinctive dress, which is thus described by Robert Dale Owen : "The dress worn by the children in the day school, both boys and girls, is composed of strong white cotton cloth of the best quality which can be procured. It is formed in the shape of a Roman tunic, and reaches in the boys' dresses to the knee, and in those of the girls to the ankle. These dresses are changed three times a week, that they may be kept perfectly clean and neat."¹

Such in outline was the system of education at New Lanark under Owen's guidance. In order to complete the picture, I will quote a few extracts from some of the accounts left on record by the numerous visitors to the place in the period from 1816 to 1826.

In March, 1818, John Griscom, Professor of Chemistry and Natural Philosophy in the New York Institute, in the course of a tour in Europe, in which he inspected the poor colonies in Holland and other social experiments of the kind, came to New Lanark and stayed a night with Owen. He was most favourably impressed with all that he saw in the establishment. Of his host he writes : "I know no man of equal celebrity, whose manners are less imposing, and who has more of the candour and openness of a child." Professor Griscom gives a detailed account

¹ *Outline of the System of Education at New Lanark*, p. 33. An anonymous writer who visited New Lanark in August, 1822, describes the whole dress of the boys as consisting of a shirt, and a plaid jacket reaching almost to the knees. Other writers mention a tartan kilt as forming a conspicuous part of the boys' dress. Possibly the cotton tunic was only for summer wear (see *New Existence*, Part V., p. xxviii).

of the whole school, from which I extract a passage relating to the infant school.

“One apartment of the school afforded a novel and pleasing spectacle. It consisted of a great number of children, from one to three or four years of age. They are assembled in a large room, under the care of a judicious female, who allows them to amuse themselves with various selected toys, and occasionally collects the oldest into a class, and teaches them their letters. They appeared perfectly happy, and as we entered the little creatures ran in groups to seize their benefactor by the hand, or to pull him by the coat, with the most artless simplicity. This baby school is of great consequence to the establishment, for it enables the mothers to shut up their houses in security, and to attend to their duties in the factory, without concern for their families.”¹

Another writer, who visited New Lanark in 1822, says that “the moment Owen came into the court where the infants were assembled, they ran in crowds to meet their benefactor, and stretched out their little hands to welcome him or looked up with looks of gratitude as he passed. There were some too young to walk alone, and these were seen endeavouring with the greatest anxiety to get forward by the assistance of the wall, or whoever would help them.”²

At a later date we have an account from another American visitor. The following description is taken from the editorial correspondence of the *New York*

¹ *A Year in Europe*, by John Griscom, Vol. II., p. 385. New York, 1823.

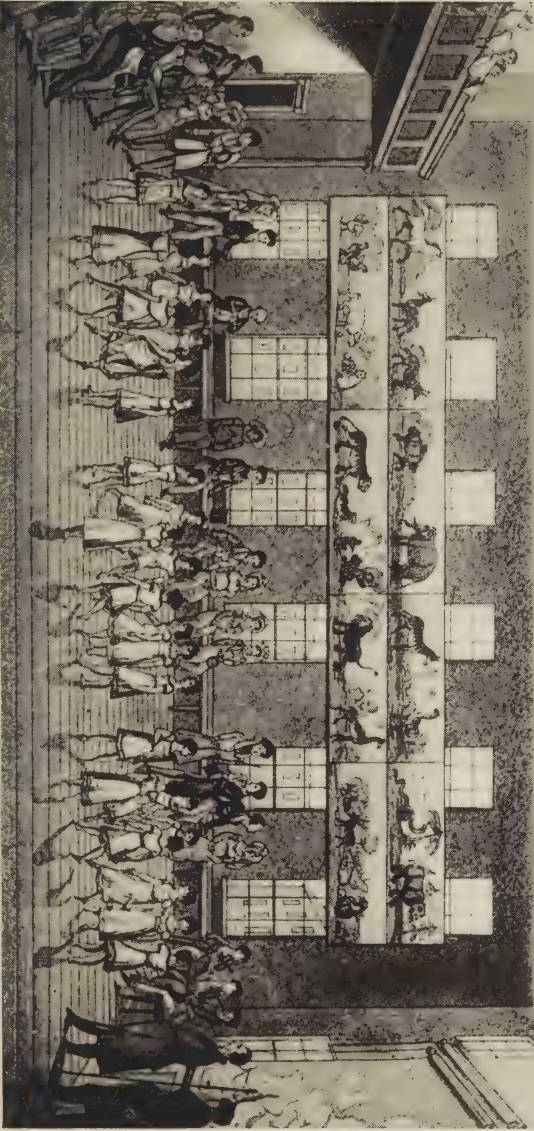
² Account of a visit in August, 1822, published in the *Dublin Report* quoted in *New Existence*, Part V., p. xxxi.

Statesman, May 20, 1826.¹ The date of the visit was November, 1825. Owen at the time was in America, and the visitor was shown round the establishment by the superintendent.

“ He first introduced us into a large hall, containing much of the apparatus used in Mr. Owen’s system of education. Among other articles were large historical charts, covering the walls of the apartment,—a folio volume of topographical delineations of the principal towns in Scotland,—a terrestrial globe six feet in diameter,—and a suite of emblems designed to illustrate the principles of English grammar. The last invention has at least the merit of being ingenious. It consists in personifying the parts of speech, and in assigning to each its relative importance according to the military system. General Noun figures in his cocked hat, sword, and double epaulettes. By his side stands Colonel Verb, and so on down to Corporal Adverb.

“ From this vestibule of the establishment the superintendent took us upstairs to the large dancing-hall, which opens precisely at seven o’clock every morning. Here we found some eighty or a hundred children of both sexes, at an average age of about ten, paraded on the floor, under the charge of a dancing-master, and moving in measured steps to the music of an orchestra. They were all in uniform—the boys wearing Highland kilts of plaid, and the girls gingham of a different figure. Both sexes met the floor with naked feet. After undergoing sundry drill in marches and counter-marches, they were directed to take partners for cotillons, to

¹ Quoted in *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. I., p. 317, and in *New Existence*, Part V., pp. xl., xli.



From a contemporary coloured engraving in the possession of Mr. Sidney Ball, of St. John's College, Oxford.

MR. OWEN'S INSTITUTION, NEW LANARK.

which were added strathspeys, reels, and other national dances.

“Next came a concert of music. The children were paraded in battalia, and sang half a dozen of the finest Scotch songs in full chorus. So far as I am a judge, they made no discords, and the effect was certainly pleasing as well as imposing. Music is learned upon the Lancasterian plan,¹ from a large roll many yards in extent, containing the gamut, with the addition of select tunes. It is placed in a conspicuous part of the room, where the notes can be distinctly seen at the same moment by every pupil. The words are committed to memory from printed cards, embracing a selection of the best songs. Perfect order, decorum and good feeling seemed to prevail among the children, who are taken promiscuously from the families of the labourers.

“From the ball-room, we proceeded to the other departments of the school, and heard classes go through with their recitations in geography and botany. The former is taught entirely by maps, and the latter by transparent plates. In both the children answered with surprising promptness and accuracy. Girls of twelve years old appear to be perfectly versed in the Linnæan system of classification, and able at a glance, not only to give the technical names of the parts of a plant, but to reduce it to its genus and species. How far such knowledge is acquired by rote; what effect the discipline has upon the mind; and whether some of the branches taught are relatively the most important, are questions

¹ The plan according to Owen was not Lancasterian (*New Existence*, Part V., p. xliii.). But by this date the regulations of January, 1824, had presumably come into force, and the master would in that case be a Lancasterian. See below.

upon the discussion of which I am not disposed to enter. My general impression, however, was, that while Mr. Owen's system is calculated to divest large manufacturing establishments of their terrors, by removing gross ignorance, vulgarity of manners, and vicious habits, and by substituting in their places the decencies and refinements of good society, it is somewhat deficient in those branches which qualify the young mind for the more serious duties and avocations of life."

In quoting this account in the Appendix to Part V. of *The New Existence of Man upon Earth*, Owen explains that the writer had evidently not comprehended the whole scheme of instruction of New Lanark, which included not merely reading, writing, arithmetic, sewing, knitting, etc., but also practical instruction in the arrangement and management of domestic concerns, and in various useful arts, as well as the moral education which formed the backbone of the whole scheme.

As regards the general effect of the New Lanark system of education on the conduct and character of the children, we have some very striking testimony.

Thus James Smith, in his *Excursions in Scotland in 1820*:¹

"It has been a great object with Robert Owen to extinguish the government by fear; and in the attainment of this he has been very successful, even with the youngest of his flock. It was singularly gratifying to observe, wherever we met with any of the children, with what delighted looks they received him. I may further state that in all my observations on the children, in the schools, at their play, or elsewhere, I did not

¹ Published in 1824. Quoted in *New Existence*, Part V., p. xxxvii.

see one angry look or gesture. There was, on the contrary, a harmony in all their intercourse, of which I can scarcely speak too highly."

I will conclude by quoting from two reports of a more representative character testifying to the excellent results of the training afforded to the children "in this happy village," as the first report styles it.

In 1819 the Guardians of the Poor in the township of Leeds appointed a deputation to report upon the system of education pursued at New Lanark. The deputation, which consisted of three men, Edward Baines, of the Leeds *Mercury*, Robert Oastler and John Cawood, visited New Lanark in August. They found that the number of children between two and ten years of age was 380; and they reported that—

"These latter are receiving daily instructions in the schools; and by showing to them a spirit of kindness and impressing them with a sense of their duty (without the hope of reward or the fear of punishment), they are making satisfactory progress in reading, writing, and accounts, as well as in music and dancing, in addition to which the girls are taught to sew.

"In the education of the children the thing that is most remarkable is the general spirit of kindness and affection which is shown towards them, and the entire absence of everything that is likely to give them bad habits, with the presence of whatever is calculated to inspire them with good ones; the consequence is, that they appear like one well-regulated family, united together by the ties of the closest affection. We heard no quarrels from the youngest to the eldest; and so strongly impressed are they with the conviction that their interest

and duty are the same, and that to be happy themselves it is necessary to make those happy by whom they are surrounded, that they had no strife but in offices of kindness. With such dispositions, and with their young minds well stored with useful knowledge, it appeared to us that if it should be their destiny to go out to service or to be apprenticed, the families in which they are fixed would find them an acquisition instead of a burden ; and we could not avoid the expression of a wish that the orphan children in our Workhouses had the same advantage of moral and religious instruction, and the same prospect of being made happy themselves and useful to the families in which they are placed."

Of the children who had already passed through the schools and were now employed in the mills through the day, with the opportunity, if they wished, of attending school for $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours in the evening, the deputation writes :

"The deportment of these young people, owing probably to the advantages of their early training, is very exemplary. In business they are regular and diligent, and in their manners they are mild and engaging."¹

The Duke of Kent, father of Queen Victoria, was one of Owen's warmest friends and patrons. In this same year, 1819, he deputed his physician, Dr. H. Grey Macnab, to visit New Lanark and report upon the whole establishment there. Owen's outspoken denunciation of all religions had created strong antagonism to him in many quarters. Macnab himself, as he explains in his book, was somewhat prejudiced against Owen because of the want of judgment and proportion shown

¹ Quoted in *New Existence*, Part V., pp. xxiv, xxv.

in his writings. He was not even convinced of Owen's sincerity, and was by no means prepared to take his success as a practical reformer on his own uncorroborated testimony. The Duke, who knew Owen's real worth, no doubt promoted the enquiry less for his own satisfaction than as a means of dispelling the public prejudice.

Macnab, a man perhaps of too kindly and emotional a temperament for the exercise of dispassionate criticism, found all his doubts dissolve away under the genial influence of the place, and blessed the undertaking altogether. Of the school and the children he can scarcely trust himself to speak :—

“The children and youth in this delightful colony are superior in point of conduct and character to all the children and youth I have ever seen. The maxim of our poet, that nature unadorned is most adorned, is recalled to the mind on being amongst these promising candidates for honour and happiness. I shall not attempt to give a faithful description of the beautiful fruits of the social affections displayed in the young, innocent, and fascinating countenances of these happy children and youths.

“The pen of a Milton and the pencil of a Rubens could not do justice to such a picture ; all, therefore, I shall say here is, that the first two days I was at New Lanark were days of pure enjoyment. The effects produced on my mind were such, that during that time I was actually disqualified for examining coolly and deliberately the very objects of my visit : and it is a fact, that my stay at New Lanark was prolonged chiefly owing to this circumstance.”

Of the character of the inhabitants as a whole he

writes that he found at New Lanark "more of the social virtues and less of the reigning vices . . . than will be found in any community of the same population in any part of the civilised world."¹

From this brief statement it is not difficult to infer that Owen's inspiration, as already said, was derived mainly from Rousseau.² A return to Nature has been the cry of all educational reformers. But Owen's return to Nature, in the abolition of all rewards and punishments, and the replacement of these arbitrary incentives to virtue by a demonstration of the natural consequences of social and unsocial conduct, was more radical than that of any other reformer save Rousseau. We can almost hear the tones of the instructor of the infant Emile. From Rousseau also came the principle that knowledge of the things themselves should precede knowledge of their signs in written or printed language. Rousseau would

¹ *The New Views of Mr. Owen of Lanark, impartially considered, etc.*, by Henry Grey Macnab, M.D. London, 1819.

² How much of the details of his system Owen derived from Rousseau's most prominent disciples, and his own contemporaries, Oberlin and Pestalozzi, it is difficult to say. As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, Oberlin had made geography a prominent feature in his course. He had also started infant schools long before Owen. But Owen foreshadowed his infant school in his *New View of Society*, and actually opened it in 1816, the year before what was apparently his only visit to Oberlin's establishment. Whether he had previously heard of Oberlin's experiment does not appear: and the point is, any way, of no great importance. At any rate Owen was the first to establish an infant school in these islands. Thus S. Wilderspin writes: "The first Infant School that was heard of in this country (*sc.* England) was established at Westminster in the year 1819: the master of that institution is J. Buchanan, who came from Mr. Owen's establishment at New Lanark, where an Infant School had previously been founded by that gentleman" (*Importance of Educating the Infant Poor*, second edition 1824, p. 23). Dr. Thomas Pole (*Observations on Infant Schools*, Bristol, 1823) writes to a similar effect. Subsequently Brougham, *more suo*,

have had Emile learn to read and write only when he was twelve years old. Owen, in a passage already quoted, would have preferred to postpone this branch of instruction at any rate until the child was ten years old. But in this matter he was forced, like others who have endeavoured to put educational reforms into practice, to reckon with the parents. Owen probably had to contend also with his partners, who were no doubt of opinion that the full benefit of the Scriptures could only be gathered by the youthful student who could read them for himself.

There is one point of some weight in which Owen's system of education appears to have been lacking. Rousseau had insisted upon the importance of finding work for the hands, especially of young children. Pestalozzi had always seen the importance of manual exercises. At Stanz he had tried "to connect study with

seems to have claimed the honour for the Westminster School referred to, on the ground that Owen's infant school being attached to a manufactory, did not count (see *Practical Educationists*, by James Leitch, Glasgow 1876, p. 166). But in later utterances Brougham gave full credit to Owen. There are several points in which Owen's practice resembles Pestalozzi. Thus singing played an important part in Pestalozzi's system of training. The children in his schools learnt to sing as they learned to talk, by imitation (De Guimps, *Life of Pestalozzi*, translated by J. Russell, p. 415). In this connection it is interesting to note that it was one of Pestalozzi's methods to make the children repeat statements in chorus so as to fix facts in their memory. One of the visitors to New Lanark notes that the children there would answer the lecturer's questions simultaneously, and this "simultaneous answering," he notes, was "executed by so many with great precision" (*New Existence*, Part V., p. xxvii). Military exercises, again, formed part of the regular curriculum at Yverdun. (It is to be noted, however, that in the *Third Essay on the Formation of Character*, Owen had dwelt upon the importance of drilling the boys, both as discipline, and as a first step in military training (*Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 303).) We have already seen that at a later period Owen borrowed Pestalozzi's method of mental arithmetic.

manual labour, the school with the workshop"; at Yverdun drawing formed an important feature in the course; the pupils were also taught to construct geometrical solids in cardboard, to make clay models of the neighbouring river-valley, and so on. But Owen seems to have paid little attention to this particular requirement. The claims of eye and ear were abundantly satisfied; the voice found employment in singing and speaking; the bodies of the children were exercised in drilling and dancing. But no provision seems to have been made for drawing, modelling or constructive work of any kind. We hear, indeed, of toys and games for the younger children; but not of any systematic employment. No doubt the time was not yet fully ripe for the idea. Froebel's first Kindergarten was not opened until 1837. Possibly also Owen may have thought the numerous calls of domestic life and, later, the work of the mills, would provide all the manual exercise required. The girls were taught sewing and knitting: but to teach drawing, modelling, or any mechanical art, except by way of apprenticeship to a trade, would no doubt have involved expense, both for staff and materials, which his partners might have been unwilling to sanction.

For the rest, whatever part of Owen's system may have been due to inspiration from other minds, whatever defects we may find in the execution of the scheme, the two things needful for the results achieved were all his own—the spirit of unwearied loving-kindness, and the strong simplicity which was able to keep its regard fixed on the highest issues of life and character.

So matters went on for about eight years. From

the outset there had been difficulties between Owen and his partners. As already said, the most active of them were devout Quakers, of whom two, William Allen and Joseph Fox, had taken a prominent part in supporting the Lancasterian Association, afterwards the British and Foreign Schools Society. On the committee of that Society they had fought hard and continuously for the full representation of their religious views; they had indeed at one time persuaded the committee to pass a rule that no reading lesson should be given in the schools, except from the Bible.¹

To men of this stamp Owen's religious views were monstrous and intolerable. It is probable that at the outset they had not fully realised the thorough-going nature of his "infidelity." But enlightenment on this point came very early in the history of the partnership. In August, 1814, Allen dined at Braxfield and had "much painful conversation on the subject of Owen's peculiar opinions";² and misunderstanding was no longer possible after the declaration of August 21, 1817, in the London Tavern. The partners nevertheless continued for some years longer to give Owen a very free hand in his educational reforms. But, as we read in Allen's diary, there were constant searchings of heart. The Bible and Catechism were, no doubt, as prescribed by the articles of partnership, regularly read and taught in the schools both on weekdays and Sundays. But Owen was without wisdom of the worldly kind; he made no secret of his opinions, and could not, probably, be withheld from preaching them at all seasons and to all men. In one respect,

¹ *Life of Francis Place*, by Graham Wallas, p. 105.

² *Life of William Allen*, Vol. I., p. 209.

indeed, the Quakers seem to have done Owen an injustice. As fanatical in his belief as they in theirs, he was gifted with a tolerance, the direct outcome of his opinions, which was outside the comprehension of men like Fox and Allen. It probably did not need the urgency of his partners to permit the reading of the Bible and other religious teaching in his schools. The fact that the parents generally wished it, and would have been uneasy and mistrustful if such teaching had been omitted, would no doubt have been sufficient inducement. But Allen and Fox may well have feared that even the Shorter Catechism might prove too frail a defence against the daily spectacle of infidelity in high places. Moreover, there were other features in the scheme which were objectionable. Singing, dancing, and military drill were all abhorrent to the religious views of the Society of Friends. They may even be pardoned if they took exception to the lectures on geography, with their accompanying moral lessons.

Lastly, the New Lanark establishment for eight years had been a place of pilgrimage for royalties, statesmen, philanthropists, reformers, socialists, and humanitarian enthusiasts of all kinds. The pilgrims had come from every country, to the number, it is said, of thirty a day for months at a time.¹ Such a constant influx of visitors, each of whom would require to be shown over the whole establishment, was no doubt bad for business. It was very likely, also, bad for the children themselves; and it would tend to warp the scheme of education and to thrust the purely spectacular parts, the singing,

¹ *New Existence*, Part. V., p. xxxviii.

dancing, and drilling, into undue prominence.¹ Apart from the fact that these spectacular parts were precisely what the Quakers objected to, the whole business afforded an advertisement to Owen's rationalist views which must have been peculiarly distasteful to sincere if somewhat fanatical Christians. That men of such opposite views should have sunk their differences for the common good, and have worked together in some kind of harmony for so many years is surely creditable to the common sense and humanity of both parties. But the end was bound to come.

There had been, as said, sharp differences of opinion from the outset. Thus Allen writes in his diary for the month of September, 1814: "Sat down with R. Owen and J. Fox to a most important discussion of several points in the articles of partnership, particularly those relating to the training of the children and the use of the Holy Scriptures. This latter Fox and I made a *sine qua non*, at least as far as we are concerned, and Owen at length yielded."²

In 1818 Allen and Foster visited Lanark "to discover whether any attempt is making there to weaken the faith of the people in divine revelation."³ They found that Owen had at first refused leave to the people to found a Bible Society; it was, however, established later, and Mrs. Owen and the family subscribed to it. From two ministers in the town the partners received

¹ Aiton, in the work already quoted, criticises the results of Owen's educational system, and endeavours to show that owing to the scant attention paid to reading, writing and arithmetic, the children forgot these accomplishments within a few years of leaving school.

² *Life of William Allen*, Vol. I., p. 209.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 344, letter to William Wilberforce.

a good report of the morality and sobriety of the people at New Lanark, and the cheering intelligence that Owen's principles appeared to have taken no root in the population. Allen tells us that he asked one of these gentlemen to visit the schools periodically and to let him know if the Scripture reading were neglected. The same evening Allen relieved his mind by addressing the people for three-quarters of an hour at a meeting in the large room of the Institution.¹

In July, 1822, the London proprietors seem again to have become uneasy, and appointed Allen, Foster, and Gibbs to investigate the state of New Lanark. They reported that the people read the Bible and many other religious books regularly, but that the system of education stood much in need of revision. Allen himself was rendered "so miserable by the manner in which the important business of education had been carried on that he had decided on withdrawing," unless it could be set right.² He told Owen that he and the other partners were determined "to prevent him from making New Lanark an infidel establishment."³ Thereafter discussions and negotiations for the reform of the schools proceeded for some months between Owen and his London partners, and finally, on January 21, 1824, the Firm of Robert Owen and Co. put their signatures to a series of resolutions, providing for the dismissal of some of the old teachers, and the appointment of a new master, John Daniel, who was to instruct the children from

¹ *Life of William Allen*, Vol. I., p. 346.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. II., p. 237.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 363.

the age of six years old and upwards according to the system of education practised by the British and Foreign Schools Society. Dancing was no longer to be taught at the expense of the company, nor singing and music "with the exception of instruction in psalmody." There was also to be a public reading of the Holy Scriptures "and other religious exercises" on one evening a week. Allen was a lecturer on natural and experimental philosophy at Guy's Hospital, and it was doubtless owing to his influence that provision was still to be made for the teaching of natural science. There was to be a lecture twice a week in the evening, at which the whole population could attend, on chemistry, mechanics, and other branches of "Experimental Philosophy and Natural History"; and suitable apparatus was to be provided for illustrating these lectures. But there was to be no more moral geography. And even the national dress of Scotland fell under the Quaker ban. One resolution reads:

"That having considered the dress of the children, we are of opinion that decency requires that all males as they arrive at the age of six years should wear trousers or drawers; we agree, therefore, that they shall be required to be so clothed."¹

Such was the ending of a great educational experiment. But perhaps a juster verdict would substitute transformation for ending. Owen's partners were, like himself, men of views too liberal for general acceptance by their contemporaries; they were as sincere as he in their desire to give education to all; and perhaps they did not greatly differ as to the means. In some respects

¹ *New Existence*, Part. V., p. viii.

it is likely that their views were sounder, because more moderate, than Owen's.¹

At all events the schools at New Lanark continued to flourish, first under the original partners, later under the successor of one of them, John Walker, until the institution of Board Schools in Scotland in 1872. And dancing was still permitted, and still apparently taught, though whether at the company's expense or not does not appear. When I visited New Lanark for the first time in the spring of 1903, my guide, John Campbell Melrose, told me that in his boyhood, some thirty years back, he and the other children still danced every morning from 7.15 to 8 a.m. The dancing-room was one of the upper rooms in the old building, and the name of the last dancing-master was David Dunn. According to my guide, the paintings and maps were only taken down when the school gave place to a Board School. A number of large cardboard plates of flowers and plants were still to be seen at the time of my visit; a few geometrical models and other things; and especially

¹ The new rules of January, 1824, were apparently not carried into effect very promptly, or else the new system differed in effect but little from the old; for the writer in the *New York Statesman* (see the account quoted above in the text) describes a visit paid in November, 1825, at which he witnessed singing, dancing, drilling—and kilts!

A correspondent writing to Owen on August 27, 1831, says: "On Saturday last I made a pilgrimage to New Lanark, and was delighted with the place. The Institution is still conducted upon principles superior to those of any other establishment in the Kingdom: but the inhabitants are less happy than they were, and with one voice they lament the absence of their great benefactor" (letter from Massey Dawson, Manchester Collection).

A writer in the *Glasgow Free Press* in 1833 (quoted in *The Crisis*, Vol. III., p. 29) gives a similar account, and mentions in particular that singing and dancing were still taught, and that visitors still came in great numbers to see the factory and the schools.

four of the original linen rolls, which used to be hung on the walls, wound on rollers like a map. They were three or four feet wide and the largest was perhaps forty feet in length. Two of these rolls were filled with musical notation and tunes. The other two were covered with pictures, painted in oils, illustrating various members of the animal kingdom. There were zoophytes, worms, shells, crustacea, insects of the several orders, batrachia, reptiles, and at the torn end of one roll a tiger rampant in his jungle.

And between the town of Old Lanark and the mills I passed a Board School, and saw some hundred little Scotch laddies—having, alas! boots and knickerbockers in place of bare feet and kilts—formed in fours and marching in quick time round the school-yard. So that in this, at all events, Owen's foresight has been justified.

Owen's experiment at New Lanark bore early fruit in another direction. Among his friends at the time was Henry Brougham, afterwards Lord Chancellor. Brougham was much impressed by the success of the infant schools at New Lanark, and thought that an Institution of the kind might do still better service amongst the poor in a crowded city. He therefore formed a committee which included, amongst others, Owen's partner, John Walker, Henry Hase, Lord Lansdowne, Thomas Babington and Zachary Macaulay, and in 1819 an infant school was opened at Brewers' Green, Westminster. Owen cordially co-operated with the committee, and gave them the best help in his power by sending down from New Lanark the weaver, James Buchanan, whom he had selected and trained to act as master of his own school. Owen himself, on his first

visit to the Westminster school, was by no means favourably impressed. He found that Buchanan had lost his influence over the children, and that Mrs. Buchanan had been called in, to terrify them with a whip. However that may be, the Westminster school grew and flourished, and was the parent of many more. Samuel Wilderspin visited the school and pondered over all that he saw there. A few years later, in 1824, the London Infant School Society was founded, and Wilderspin was engaged to lecture on the movement, and to assist in founding similar schools throughout the Metropolis.¹

¹ See Owen's *Life*, Vol. I., p. 152, etc. *Observations on Infant Schools*, by Thomas Pole, Bristol, 1823. *Importance of Educating the Infant Poor*, by S. Wilderspin, London, 1824. *Practical Educationists*, by James Leitch, Glasgow, 1876, pp. 166 *seqq.*

CHAPTER VIII

NEW LANARK (continued)

THE Institution for the Formation of Character, and the schools carried on in connection with it, formed the most conspicuous and probably the most important part of Owen's work at New Lanark. But, as already intimated, he carried out many other reforms with most beneficial results to the health and morals of the people. Owing to the difficulties which he experienced in persuading his earlier partners to devote any share of their profits to unproductive expenditure of any kind, his measures could in the first years of his management only be carried out piecemeal, as occasion served, and it was not until after 1813 that he was really given a free hand. It is not always possible to discover from the accounts left to us, how far the reforms which he contemplated had actually been carried into effect before 1816; and it will be convenient, therefore, briefly to summarise, from his own later statements, and from various descriptions written by visitors to the mills in the period from 1816 onwards, the final results of his labours. Of the schools, and the lectures and other entertainments given in the evenings, enough has been already said in the last chapter. But it should perhaps be mentioned that the schools were open freely, not

only to the children of the New Lanark operatives, but to any children from the Old Town whose parents chose to take advantage of Owen's liberality.

Hours of Labour.—In Dale's time, and Dale, as already said, was probably the most humane employer of his day, the work had been spread over thirteen hours, from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m., with intervals of half an hour for breakfast and three-quarters of an hour for dinner, leaving eleven and three-quarter hours of actual work. During some part of the period between 1800 and 1813 Owen seems to have been compelled by his partners to raise the hours to fourteen a day.¹ They had been again reduced to thirteen before 1816, and on the 1st of January of that year they were still further cut down to twelve, with the same meal intervals as before, leaving ten and three-quarter hours of actual work.² Even these shortened hours were in Owen's view too long. As he told the Committee of 1816, he would have preferred that there should be at most ten working hours in the day.

When the hours of labour were shortened, the wages of the operatives were left unchanged. But as about half the work in the mills was piece-work, the measure had the effect, at first at any rate, of reducing the earnings of the piece-workers.³ That nevertheless the measure was cordially welcomed by the operatives is proved by the fact that a year after its introduction, in January,

¹ Owen's *Evidence before the Factory Committee of 1816*, p. 39.

² In the debate in the House of Commons on the Factory Act of 1819, the hours at New Lanark are generally referred to as ten and a half, and it seems possible that they were later actually reduced to that amount.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

1817, they tendered an address of thanks to Owen and proposed further to present him with a piece of plate. This latter, however, he refused to accept, and the money subscribed was accordingly handed over for charitable purposes. Again, in the following year, a petition was presented in the House of Commons from the operatives at New Lanark, in favour of the Factory Bill then before the House. In this petition the workers claimed that they did more work in ten and three-quarter hours than others in twelve or thirteen, because of their increased zeal and activity.¹ Of the actual effect of the shortened hours on production Owen gives us no precise information. He expresses, indeed, to the Committee of 1816 his conviction that manufacturers would not lose by reason of shortened hours of production; that such shortened hours would "hardly make a perceptible difference in the prime cost of any article." But he had no figures to give: and it is clear that he reckoned any slight increase in the cost of production as insignificant in comparison with the improved health and enlarged opportunities of instruction afforded to the workers.²

Fortunately there is a document in the Manchester Collection which throws some light upon the effect on production of the shortened hours of labour. In 1822 Owen's son Robert, at his father's request, prepared a statement, which is given below, of the total wages and produce of the mills for the eight years from 1814 to 1821. It will be seen that in the year 1816—the first year of the shortened hours—the gross wages of the operatives show an increase of about three per cent., whilst

¹ *Hansard*, Vol. 37, p. 1182.

² *Evidence*, p. 21.

the wages of the mechanics and the salaries of the superintendents, etc., have risen in a much higher proportion. During the same period the produce has actually fallen in weight to the extent of nearly eight per cent., though, as a finer quality of yarn was produced, the actual fall in value was probably much less. In the following year, 1817, the gross wages of the operatives have again risen, to the extent of two and a half per cent. On the other hand, the wages of superintendence have decreased and the produce shows a much larger proportionate increase, so that much of the loss on the previous year's working appears to have been made good. We must share Robert Dale Owen's regret that time did not permit of the value of the produce being included in the statement, for the money value would probably have afforded a more precise measure than either pounds or hanks of the productiveness of labour under the new conditions. I have added an analysis of the table showing for each year the amount in pounds and hanks represented by £1 sterling of the operatives' and of the gross wages respectively.

STATEMENT OF WAGES AND PRODUCE IN THE YEARS
1814 TO 1821.

| YEAR. | MILL WAGES. | MECH. WAGES. | SALARY ACCOUNT. | TOTAL OF WAGES. | LB. | HANKS. |
|-------|-------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------|------------|
| 1814 | £ 22,096 | £ 2,627 | £ 2,747 | £ 27,471 | 1,385,390 | 34,675,088 |
| 1815 | 22,811 | 3,051 | 2,710 | 28,572 | 1,451,947 | 35,696,543 |
| 1816 | 23,509 | 3,570 | 3,131 | 30,211 | 1,339,434 | 35,582,271 |
| 1817 | 24,171 | 3,661 | 2,933 | 30,766 | 1,424,513 | 36,834,150 |
| 1818 | 23,472 | 3,495 | 2,953 | 29,921 | 1,457,096 | 35,213,114 |
| 1819 | 24,596 | 3,674 | 2,957 | 31,228 | 1,465,445 | 36,511,553 |
| 1820 | 25,292 | 3,860 | 3,124 | 32,277 | 1,459,094 | 39,799,479 |
| 1821 | 23,675 | 3,382 | 2,940 | 29,997 | 1,377,580 | 37,184,722 |

ANALYSIS OF STATEMENT OF WAGES AND PRODUCE IN THE
YEARS 1814 TO 1821.

| YEAR. | £1 OF MILL WAGES PRODUCES | | £1 OF TOTAL WAGES PRODUCES | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|--------|----------------------------|--------|
| | LB. | HANKS. | LB. | HANKS. |
| 1814 | 62·7 | 1569·3 | 50·4 | 1262·2 |
| 1815 | 63·6 | 1564·9 | 50·8 | 1249·4 |
| 1816 | 56·9 | 1513·1 | 44·3 | 1177·8 |
| 1817 | 58·9 | 1523·9 | 46·3 | 1197·2 |
| 1818 | 62·1 | 1500·2 | 48·7 | 1176·9 |
| 1819 | 59·6 | 1484·4 | 46·9 | 1169·2 |
| 1820 ¹ | 57·7 | 1573·6 | 45·2 | 1233·1 |
| 1821 ¹ | 58·2 | 1579·1 | 45·9 | 1239·6 |

Child Labour.—As already said, Owen raised the lower limit of age for the employment of children to ten years. He would have preferred that no children should be employed in the mills until twelve, and allowed any children whose parents wished it to remain in the schools until that age. But the privilege was rarely if ever taken advantage of; the parents were no doubt unable to forego the children's earnings.

Wages.—The deputation despatched in 1819 by the Guardians of the Poor at Leeds comment in their report on the lowness of the wages paid. The average *weekly* wages at New Lanark for youths under eighteen was 4s. 3d., and for girls under eighteen 3s. 5d. For men the average was 9s. 11d. a week and for women 6s. The average earnings of piece-workers were 25 to 50 per cent. higher in each case. Macnab points out² that Owen paid his workpeople lower wages than were commonly paid in similar establishments elsewhere.

¹ One of the mills was burnt down at the end of November, 1819.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 130.

And Owen himself before the Committee of 1816 gives testimony to the same effect.¹ Owen cites the case of a man who had been earning 18s. a week at New Lanark, and left to earn a guinea a week in some mills at Glasgow. Shortly afterwards he applied to be taken on again at New Lanark; and, his old place having been filled up, he was glad to accept an inferior position at only 14s. a week.

There was also the public store, established originally by Dale, but enlarged and improved under Owen's management. Provisions, clothing, etc., of all the best qualities were purchased wholesale, and retailed at prices some twenty per cent. or more below that charged at ordinary shops for articles of inferior quality. The profit realised by the sales amounted nevertheless to about £700 a year—sufficient, as Owen told the Committee of 1816, to defray the entire cost of the schools.²

The working classes of Scotland, it may be hazarded, are not more given to sobriety than the working classes of other nations. Nor were the people of Lanark before Owen's advent in any way superior in this respect to their fellow-countrymen generally. The worthy gentleman who wrote a report on Lanark for Sinclair's *Statistical Account of Scotland* puts the matter in delicate and scarcely

¹ *Evidence*, pp. 22, 23. Before the same Committee Adam Bogle, partner in a Glasgow firm of cotton-spinners, gave evidence that in their mule-twist factory the average wages (men, women and children) per head were 9s. 8d. a week. He does not say how many children were included in the total, but probably not less than half (*Report*, p. 166).

² That is, exclusive of rent. Writing in 1849, however, Owen estimated the cost of the schools to the company at £1,200 a year. See *New Existence*, Part V., p. 62.

ambiguous language. The people of Lanark, he says, "are naturally generous, hospitable and fond of strangers, which induces them sometimes to make free with the bottle," and he adds that whilst "drunkenness among the better class of inhabitants is of late rather unusual, it is less so among the others." Owen, as we have already seen, recognised the evil, and showed equal courage and sagacity in the methods which he adopted for remedying it. He found that the people got their supplies of food and also of spirits from several small retail shops.¹ Owen felt, no doubt, that it would be impracticable to enforce total abstinence among his people. He boldly accepted the situation, therefore, and included whiskey amongst the articles to be obtained at the public store. Probably, as Macnab suggests, he trusted largely to the effects of publicity to shame the workers into sobriety. Possibly also there was some restriction as to the hours of sale and as to the amount to be purchased. From a passage in evidence before the Committee of 1816, it appears that the amount of whiskey purchased was entered in the purchaser's pass-book²—no doubt in order that payment might be deducted from the wages. It is unlikely that whiskey was treated exceptionally in

¹ *Life*, Vol. I., p. 65. Robert Dale Owen (*Threading my Way*, p. 70) says that in Dale's time no grog-shops were permitted in the village, but that the people got their drink from the Old Town. This account of the matter is perhaps not inconsistent with the statement in the text; the small shops referred to may have been in Old Lanark. At any rate there is general agreement that drunkenness was very prevalent in Dale's time.

² *Report*, p. 167. The person referred to, a woman, had left New Lanark after three years' employment there, ostensibly because she did not like dancing. But inspection of her pass-book suggested another explanation. For the first six months of her employment her expenditure on whiskey was only 1s. 10d. : in the last six months it had risen to 22s.

this respect, so that it seems probable that all article could thus be obtained on short credit at the stores; and the use of money would thus be avoided, whilst a check would readily be instituted on undue consumption of intoxicants.

But Owen did not, at any rate in the earlier years of the experiment, trust exclusively to measures of this kind for repressing intemperance. He employed watchmen to patrol the streets and report any case of drunkenness. The offenders were fined for the first and second offence, and were liable to dismissal on the third occasion.¹ By general testimony his efforts met with complete success, and New Lanark appears to have been the soberest village in Scotland. It was also one of the most moral. We have unfortunately no statistics of the number of illegitimate births at New Lanark in Dale's time, but it is certain that Dale did his best to repress immorality. Owen, however, tells us that on his first coming he found the number of illegitimate children considerable, and that "they increased for two or three years."² He then instituted a system of fines, and made the father in each case contribute 2s. and the mother 1s. weekly to a Poor Fund. By this and other means the number of births out of wedlock was greatly diminished. In 1819 the Leeds Deputation state that "the moral habits of the people are very exemplary," and furnish confirmation of the statement in the fact that during the previous nine and a half years, with 1,380 women, there had been only twenty-eight

¹ *Threading my Way*, p. 70.

² *Report*, p. 40. The statement in inverted commas probably does not mean that the rate of illegitimate births increased.

illegitimate births, and the father was in most cases non-resident.¹

Amongst minor benefits Owen provided medical attendance for all at New Lanark.² There was also a Sick Fund, which the workpeople themselves maintained, each person contributing for the purpose a sixtieth part of his wages;³ and a Savings Bank, the deposits in which during the year 1818 amounted to over £3,000.⁴ Owen had also contemplated establishing public kitchens and eating-rooms, and had designed to set aside part of the old school-buildings for the purpose. He estimated that the workpeople would save £4,000 or £5,000 a year by this means.⁵

¹ According to Aiton (*op. cit.*, p. 22) the Lanark Presbytery in 1823 reported that the moral state of New Lanark was no better under Owen than under "the late excellent Mr. Dale." But the testimony is a mere vague expression of belief: and the witnesses can hardly be held impartial.

² *Robert Owen at New Lanark*, p. 13; *Macnab*, p. 99.

³ *Life*, Vol. I., p. 281. The management of this Sick Fund in the later years of Owen's residence at New Lanark appears to have caused some friction. In November, 1823, some of the workpeople appealed to the London partners in the following terms: "That you (the other partners) be solicited to inform us whether a friendly invitation or a determined compulsion shall hereafter constitute the Society. That you be presented with a statement of the whole proceedings—by perusing which you will readily perceive our fundamental grievance. . . . Mr. Owen's usurpation of managing the Society agreeably to his own views, in opposition to what he certainly knows to be ours. And further we view it as a grievance of considerable magnitude to be compelled by Mr. Owen to adopt what measures soever he may be pleased to suggest on matters that entirely belong to us. Such a course of procedure is most repugnant to our minds as men, and degrading to our characters as free-born sons of highly favoured Britain" (quoted by Aiton, *op. cit.*, p. 37). The benevolence of the most benevolent of despots will not always reconcile his subjects to the loss of freedom.

⁴ *Report of the Leeds Deputation*.

⁵ Griscom, *A Year in Europe*, Vol. II., p. 384. Griscom's visit was paid in 1819.

But it does not appear that the intention was ever carried out.¹

Among other material benefits conferred upon the population during Owen's management must be mentioned the improvement in the dwelling-houses and in the general hygiene of the village mentioned in Chapter V., the throwing open of the woods near the village, and the construction of walks through them.

But all these tangible gifts formed the lesser part of the debt which the inhabitants of New Lanark owed to their employer's paternal government. There was something else than the cash nexus to bind the community together. The sincerity and benevolence of Owen's character were reflected in all around. It was not only the cleanliness, sobriety, and order of the village which impressed the frequent visitors; but the spirit of happiness and goodwill which prevailed everywhere. The Leeds Deputation gives straightforward testimony to this effect:—

“Mr. Owen's establishment is essentially a manufacturing establishment, conducted in a manner superior to any other the deputation ever witnessed, and dispensing more happiness than perhaps any other institution in the kingdom where so many poor persons are employed; and is founded on an admirable system of moral regulation. . . . Public-houses and other resorts of the vicious are nowhere to be found in this happy village; and the absence of their contaminating influence is strikingly exemplified in the contrast of manners and of conduct between the inhabitants of New Lanark,

¹ The scheme is still spoken of in the future tense by a visitor to New Lanark in 1822 (see the account quoted from the “Dublin Report” in *New Existence*, Part V., p. xxx.), and the agreement of 1824 mentions the public kitchens as still uncompleted.

and of most (we fear we may say all) other manufacturing places. . . . In the adult inhabitants of New Lanark we saw much to commend. In general they appeared clean, healthy, and sober. Intoxication, the parent of so many vices and so much misery, is indeed almost unknown here. The consequence is that they are well-clad, and well-fed, and their dwellings are inviting. . . .

“In this well-regulated colony, where almost everything is made, wanted by either the manufactory or its inhabitants, no cursing or swearing is anywhere to be heard. There are no quarrelsome men or brawling women. . . . The Scotch character has in it, no doubt, something that disposes to a more exemplary observance of the Sabbath than is generally to be met with in England ; but this circumstance apart, it is quite manifest that the New Lanark system has a tendency to improve the religious character ; and so groundless are the apprehensions expressed on the score of religion suffering injury by the prevalence of these establishments, that we accord with Mr. Owen in his assertion that the inhabitants of that place form a more religious community than any manufacturing establishment in the United Kingdom. This effect arises out of the circumstances by which they are surrounded, and is wholly independent of any sentiment on religious subjects entertained by Mr. Owen himself.”¹

To this last clause we may add the testimony of Sir William de Crespigny, who described at a meeting of the British and Foreign Philanthropic Society on June 1, 1822, a visit which he had paid to New Lanark. After

¹ *New Existence*, Part V., pp. xxiv-vi.

dwelling on the obvious health and happiness of the children, he went on to speak of the reading of the Bible in the schools, and of the diligence of the inhabitants in attending public worship on Sunday, adding, "I never saw more propriety, good conduct and devotion in any place."¹

The publication, in 1813, of Owen's *Essays on the Formation of Character* had as already said made him acquainted with many of the leading men of the day—bishops, statesmen, economists, and philanthropists. Later, his evidence before the Committee of 1816 on Factory Children, his addresses at the "City of London Tavern" in 1817, and his incessant activity after that date in promulgating his plans for the regeneration of society, carried his name over all Europe. Every one who was interested in education or social reform came to New Lanark to see the great social experiment there in process. During the ten years from 1815 to 1825, when Owen practically severed his connection with the Scotch factory, the names recorded in the Visitors' Book numbered nearly 20,000.² To quote Owen's own catalogue, the visitors included "Princes John and Maximilian of Austria, Foreign Ambassadors—many Bishops and Clergy innumerable—almost all our own nobility—learned men of all professions from all countries—and wealthy travellers for pleasure or knowledge of

¹ *New Existence*, Part V., p. xxxv. So that the verdict of the old Scotchwoman whom Bulwer Lytton interviewed at New Lanark, was as irrelevant as it was ungenerous. "'The Bairns,' said the old lady, 'turned out vera ill. They had never been taught *this*'—laying her hands on the Bible."—Lytton's *Life*, Vol. I., p. 303 (quoted by S. Walpole, *History*, Vol. IV., p. 377).

² *Threading my Way*, p. 115.

every description." Not the least interesting amongst this crowd of pilgrims was the Grand Duke Nicholas, afterwards Nicholas I., Czar of Russia, who visited New Lanark with his suite in 1816, and stayed for a night as Owen's guest at his house, Braxfield. The village band met the Duke on the outskirts of the Old Town, and escorted him to the mills. The compliment, as we learn from Robert Dale Owen, was not appreciated, though the Duke himself was too well-bred to show that his ear had been irked by indifferent music.¹ The Duke, then in his twentieth year, made a very agreeable impression on Owen and his family. He went all round the mills, asking questions and seeming to be unaffectedly interested in all that he saw and heard. He even "listened with marked attention for two hours and more to an exposition by Robert Owen of his peculiar views for the improvement of mankind."

With one of Owen's younger sons, David Dale, at that time nine or ten years old, he was so favourably impressed that he intimated a desire to take him to Russia and find him a place at his Court. He gave a more striking practical proof of the pleasure he had derived from his visit, and of his approval of his host's methods for reforming the world. For, knowing of the then prevalent apprehension amongst British statesmen and economists that our little islands were over-peopled, he suggested that Owen himself should come to Russia and bring two millions of the surplus population with him. Both offers were gratefully declined.

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 116. The date of the visit was December 26. The Grand Duke left on the following day for Moffat (see the *Times*, January 1, 1817). There is a brief account of the visit in the Russian State archives, which my friend M. Petrovo-Solovovo has kindly searched for me.

One trifling incident connected with the Duke's visit is worth recording here, as illustrating Owen's character.

"The crest of our family," writes Owen's son, "two eagles' heads, had been, as is customary, engraved on our service of plate. At supper, one of the Duke's suite, handing a silver fork to him, called his attention to the engraving as being almost an exact copy of the double eagle, part of the blazon of the Russian coat of arms. Some jest as to right of property having passed in connection with the matter, and attracted my father's attention, it suggested a gift to his guest. Accordingly, next morning, "he had a silver dessert-set packed up, and handed, just as the party were starting off, to one of the attendants, together with a letter begging the Duke's acceptance of it as a memento of his visit to New Lanark.

"My mother, good sensible matron, took exception to any such proceeding. In the case of a friend to whom we owed kindness or gratitude, or to any one who would value the offering for the donor's sake, she would not have grudged her nice forks and spoons, but to the possessor of thousands, a two days' acquaintance, who was not likely to bestow a second thought on the things!—in all which I cordially agreed with her, especially when I found William Sheddon, our butler, lamenting over his empty cases, the glittering contents of which had often excited my childish admiration."¹

Before we leave New Lanark some account of Owen's home life there—the only place where after childhood

¹ *Threading my Way*, pp. 119, 120.

he ever found a home—may appropriately be given. On their first coming to New Lanark, Owen and his young wife had settled in the cottage situated in the centre of the village—the same in which Caroline Dale and her sisters had been wont to spend their summers before her marriage. The winters, in the early years of married life, were spent in Mr. Dale's house in Charlotte Street, Glasgow; Owen himself when necessary riding between Glasgow and New Lanark. In a few years, however, as his establishment outgrew the modest dimensions of the cottage, Owen tells that he took on lease from Lord Braxfield,¹ one of the Lords of Sessions, a large house situated about two furlongs from the mills, called Braxfield House, still continuing to live in Charlotte Street during the winter.

Braxfield House stands in the midst of large and well-wooded grounds on the banks of the river. In front the grounds slope gently down to the water. Behind the house, the woods rise at a sharper angle to the table-land above. Here Owen lived for many years with his family; and here he was wont to entertain the distinguished visitors who came from all parts of the earth to see New Lanark. His family consisted of four sons—Robert Dale, William Dale, David Dale, and Richard—and three daughters, Anne Caroline, Jane Dale, and Mary.² Besides these Mrs. Owen's four younger sisters, after their father's death, for many years made their home at Braxfield, residing there when they were not at school in London.

¹ Robert Macqueen, the famous Lord Justice Clerk, died in May, 1799, so that Owen's lease must have been granted by Lord Braxfield's representatives.

² Another son, the first-born, had died in infancy.

The eldest son, Robert Dale Owen, born on Nov. 7, 1801, has in his *Autobiography*,¹ from which we have already had frequent occasion to quote, given a delightful picture of the family life at Braxfield. Unlike some who have set out to reform the world, Robert Owen carried out his principles in the family circle. Though his wife used laughingly to tax him with loving the children at the mill better than his own, there seems to have been affection enough to go round. His unvarying kindness to all seems to have been the dominant feature of his character. He was lenient even to trespassers. His son tells us how he and his father, strolling one Sunday near the river in front of Braxfield, came upon two of the mill hands—a young man and woman—who had trespassed on Owen's private grounds, and how Owen turned away rather than disturb an innocent courtship. An anonymous writer who had been brought up in New Lanark from boyhood, and ultimately became a teacher in the schools, gives another instance to the same effect. As a boy he had gone with a young companion to the Braxfield wood to cut shinties (sticks) for themselves. Whilst intent upon their lawless proceedings they felt a touch upon the shoulder. "Who can tell the perturbed state of our minds when, suddenly turning round, we found it to be none other than Mr. Owen himself! We dropped our knives, hung down our heads, and made no reply. To run away was out of the question, for he knew us both. He, however, broke silence by thus addressing us: 'Now if you had been early trained by precept, but more especially by a strict and rigorous example, to know

¹ *Threading my Way*. London, 1874.



Photo by Davidson & Sons, New Lanark.

BRAXFIELD HOUSE NEW LANARK.

and feel that your present conduct was bad, I should not now have found you thus employed ; but the blame is not justly yours, but is attached to your parents, and those more advanced in years, who by their example lead you on to think and act in a similar way to themselves. I shall say no more to you ; take the branches with you that you have cut, and should you again stand in need of anything of this kind for your amusement, first make application to me, and having gained my consent, you will then have nothing to fear from my presence.’ Such was the purport of this short lecture to the two little culprits in the midst of his woods, and having said so, he left us.”¹

But Owen was always consistent in his views. Neither men nor babies are the proper subjects of praise and blame : and therefore babies must not be whipped into obedience. When the infant Robert screamed, as he frequently did, in a fit of temper, his father desired that he should not be slapped or shaken or even scolded, but should be set down on the nursery floor and left to scream himself out. So it was done ; and the cure proved effectual. No blow was ever struck in anger in that house. There was no punishment in the Braxfield nursery, but also no praise. Children, like men, were the creatures of circumstance, and should not be praised any more than blamed, for doing what they could not help. Approval was testified only by a smile or a caress. The effect of this austere regime was that the first words of praise received from

¹ *Robert Owen at New Lanark*, p. 8. Perhaps the reader will think that to be compelled to listen to such a portentous homily was punishment enough. The writer has fairly caught the trick of Robert Owen’s style : but no doubt the actual speech is Thucydidean—in all but brevity.

an outsider produced in the youthful Robert an overwhelming effect. But the boy had his father's good sense, and the effect on the whole seems to have been salutary.¹

Robert Owen throughout his life, partly as we have already seen from necessity, partly no doubt from taste, was studiously simple in his eating and drinking. A like simplicity was enforced upon his children. The breakfast was of porridge and milk only, the supper of bread and milk ; the dinner consisted of one helping of meat, one of pudding, and as much oatmeal cake as they wanted. They were allowed neither tea, coffee, nor of course, wine or beer. Their great weekly feast, the young Robert tells us, was in the housekeeper's room on Sunday. That kindly lady, Miss Wilson, invited the children each week to a banquet, where the table was spread with toast and sweet biscuits, and tea suitably diluted was served for drink. Hence, amongst the junior members of the Owen family, Sunday was known as the *toast-biscuit-tea-day*. Robert tells us much of Miss Wilson and her kindness to the children ; of the one-armed postman who brought the letters, and taught the children to blow soap-bubbles from a clay pipe ; of the wicked boot-boy Sandy who maliciously broke the pipe ; and how the punishment which was meant for Sandy descended upon Miss Wilson's innocent head. He tells us too of his own exploits in driving and shooting crows, and riding to hounds ; of the mimic combats between his younger brother and himself, enacting respectively the rôles of Hector and Ajax ; of the dancing-master who taught them Scotch reels and

¹ *Threading my Way*, p. 47.

the cotillon, and who tried to teach them the minuet ; of the handsome young French prisoner of war, Monsieur Levasseur, who taught the two older boys French, and dared to aspire to the hand of their Aunt Mary, Mrs. Owen's sister ; of fox-hunting parsons ; of Miss Edgeworth's brother and other interesting visitors. All these histories of a child's life nearly a century ago are told with that winning simplicity which was part of Robert Dale Owen's inheritance from his father. He gives us a picture of a happy home and a family united by ties of the closest affection, which was proof even against religious differences.

Owen throughout his adult life professed some form of Deism ; and the question of theology naturally presented difficulties in the domestic circle. But these were smoothed over to a great extent by his large-hearted tolerance. We have already seen how, in the management of the schools, he respected the religious views of the parents. Griscom relates that on the first morning after his arrival at Braxfield the servant brought in a Bible with the hot water.¹ So with his father-in-law, Mr. Dale, despite their profound differences in matters of opinion, Owen seems to have lived on terms not merely of tolerance but of mutual respect and warm affection. They had, he tells us, many prolonged discussions, in which each failed to move the other, but learnt to respect his antagonist's strength and sincerity. At most, Dale would allow himself to say to Owen, in affectionate banter, "Thou needest be very right, for thou art very positive."²

¹ *A Year in Europe*, Vol. II., p. 382.

² *Autobiography*, Vol. I, p. 72.

Dale's daughter naturally inherited her father's faith, and remained a devout Presbyterian throughout her life. Owen left the education of the children in her hands, and loyally withheld from them, as long as he could, his own differing views. Thus Robert Dale Owen writes :

“I recollect, one day when he had been explaining to me how seeds produced plants and trees, that I asked him where the very, *very* first seeds came from, and that his answer did not go to shake my faith in the Mosaic account of the Creation. I remember, too, that on another occasion, fresh from my mother's lesson on the almighty and all-pervading power of the Creator, who made the sun to shine and all things to live and grow, I inquired of my father whether God went under the roots of the trees and pushed them up. But my father, in reply, only smiled and said he did not know how it was done.”¹

But the son's eyes were soon afterwards opened to the father's “infidelity” by hearing him, in a discussion with a bishop who chanced to be their guest, controvert the doctrine of man's natural depravity. The youthful Robert came to the assistance of the Church militant, receiving at the time some ill-judged praise from his ally, and the next morning a severe rebuke from his mother on the sinfulness of self-sufficiency in small boys. But as soon as the boy realised the nature of his father's opinions, he was filled with an earnest desire for his conversion. A true son of his father, young Robert at the age of eleven had a firm belief in his mission, and unbounded confidence in the efficacy of arguments, and

¹ *Threading my Way*, p. 54.

his own arguments in particular, for the conversion of opinion and the influencing of conduct.

So, nothing doubting, he set about to teach his father the error of his ways:

“I recollect, to this day, the spot on which I commenced my long-projected undertaking. It was on a path which skirted, on the farther side, the lawn in front of our house and led to the garden. I could point out the very tree we were passing when—with some misgivings, now that it was to be put to the test—I sounded my father by first asking him what he thought about Jesus Christ. His reply was to the effect that I would do well to heed His teachings, especially those relating to charity and to our loving one another.

“This was well enough, as far as it went; but it did not at all satisfy me. So, with some trepidation, I put the question direct, whether my father disbelieved that Christ was the Son of God?

“He looked a little surprised and did not answer immediately.

“‘Why do you ask that question, my son?’ he said at last.

“‘Because I am sure—’ I began eagerly.

“‘That He *is* God’s Son?’ asked my father, smiling.

“‘Yes, I am.’

“‘Did you ever hear of the Mahometans?’ said my father, while I had paused to collect my proofs.

“I replied that I had heard of such a people who lived somewhere, far off.

“‘Do you know what their religion is?’

“‘No.’

“‘They believe that Christ is not the Son of God, but that another person, called Mahomet, was God’s chosen prophet.’

“‘Do they not believe the Bible?’ asked I, somewhat aghast.

“‘No. Mahomet wrote a book called the Koran; and Mahometans believe it to be the word of God. That book tells them that God sent Mahomet to preach the gospel to them, and to save their souls.’

“Wonders crowded fast upon me. A rival Bible and a rival Saviour! Could it be? I asked, ‘Are you quite sure this is true, papa?’

“‘Yes, my dear, I am quite sure.’

“‘But I suppose there are very few Mahometans: not near—*near* so many of them as of Christians.’

“‘Do you call Catholics Christians, Robert?’

“‘O no, papa. The Pope is Antichrist.’

“My father smiled. ‘Then by Christians you mean Protestants?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘Well, there are many more Mahometans than Protestants in the world: about a hundred and forty million Mahometans, and less than a hundred million Protestants.’

“‘I thought almost everybody believed in Christ, as mamma does.’

“‘There are probably twelve hundred millions of people in the world. So, out of every twelve persons only one is a Protestant. Are you *quite* sure that the one is right and the eleven wrong?’

“My creed, based on authority, was toppling. I had no answer ready. During the rest of the walk I remained

almost silent, engrossed with new ideas, and replying chiefly in monosyllables when spoken to.

“And so ended this notable scheme of mine for my father’s conversion.”¹

Ultimately Robert Dale Owen came to share his father’s views on religious and social questions, and for some years worked with him as his staunchest disciple and ally.

¹ *Threading my Way*, pp. 60, 61.

CHAPTER IX

THE FIRST FACTORY ACT

O WEN had whilst still quite a young man won a name in the cotton trade for the fineness and excellence of the yarns spun under his management. At a somewhat later date we find him taking a prominent place in the councils of the trade. In 1803 he was a member of the Committee of Management of the Board representing the Cotton industry; and at a meeting of the Committee on February 2 of that year he presented a report entitled "Observations on the Cotton Trade of Great Britain and on the late Duties on the Importation of Cotton Wool." There was at the time much dissatisfaction amongst the cotton lords. The import duties on raw cotton which had been in force since 1798 had been repealed in 1801, and again imposed, with additions, in 1802. Owen's paper begins by setting out briefly some statistics of the trade, with an estimate that the wages paid during the previous year amounted to no less than thirteen million pounds sterling. From these figures he deduces the importance of the industry to the country at large, and the serious results which must ensue on any diminution in its prosperity. He concludes with a temperate and carefully reasoned argument demonstrating the impolicy of a tax upon raw material and the risk that the trade would thereby be

driven into foreign countries, some of which were already in a position to obtain labour, and now also raw material, at a cheaper rate than Great Britain.

Owen's argument was no doubt sound. But probably the Government felt that the cotton-spinners were making such enormous profits that even a tax upon raw material which amounted in some cases, according to Owen's calculations, to as much as 20 per cent.,¹ could not do them much harm, and must bring in something to the coffers of a nation impoverished by long war. At any rate they were not influenced by Owen's reasoning, for in the course of this same year, 1803, the duties were raised by more than 50 per cent.²

Twelve years later the duties on raw cotton, wherever originating, were 16s. 11d. the 100 lb., and a meeting was summoned by the Lord Provost of Glasgow at the end of January, 1815, to agitate for a repeal of this heavy taxation. Owen spoke at the meeting, which

¹ The highest duty on cotton in 1802 was 15s. the 100 lb., the lowest price quoted about 10d. a lb.—which would represent a duty of 18 per cent. *ad valorem*. (See the Tables given in Baines's *History of the Cotton Manufacture*, pp. 313, 326.)

² DUTIES ON RAW COTTON.

| | 1802. | 1803. |
|--|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Imported from East Indies | £4 16s. per cent. <i>ad val.</i> | } 16s. 8d. per 100 lb. |
| " " Turkey and United States | 7s. 10d. per 100 lb. | |
| " " British plantations ... | 10s. 6d. " " | |
| " " Any other place ... | 15s. " " | |
| | | } 25s. per 100 lb. |

Baines, *loc cit.*

Half of the new duties levied in 1803 consisted of a special war tax, 8s. 4d. the 100 lb. on British, American, and Turkish cotton, and 12s. 6d. on all other cotton, imposed by the Act 43 George III. c. 70.

was held in the Tontine Hall, and as his remarks met with a reception not altogether favourable, he repeated them a day or two later in the form of a letter to the *Glasgow Chronicle*. In this later pronouncement he begins by restating the arguments which he had used twelve years before, setting forth the importance of the cotton trade to the nation, and the imprudence, in view of the keen competition with other countries, of imposing a heavy tax upon the raw material. So far, as he tells us in his *Autobiography*, his speech met with the full assent of the meeting.

But he failed to carry the meeting with him when he went on to draw their attention to another aspect of the question. The cotton manufacture with its vast profits was not, he pointed out, of unmixed benefit to the nation : "I know from personal experience that the labouring classes were much more happy in their agricultural pursuits, than they can be while engaged, as they now are, in most branches of the cotton manufacture. The lamentable results, however, can be known only by experience ; and now the experience is acquired, it is too late to retrace our steps. Were we inclined, we cannot now return to our former state ; for without the cotton trade, our increased population cannot be supported, the interest of the national debt paid, nor the expenses of our fleets and armies defrayed. Our existence as an independent power, now, I regret to say, depends on the continuance of this trade, because no other can be substituted in its place. True indeed it is, that the main pillar and prop of the political greatness of our country is a manufacture which, as it is now carried on, is destructive of the health, morals, and social comforts

of the mass of the people engaged in it. It is only since the introduction of the cotton trade, that children at an age before they have acquired strength of body or mental instruction, have been forced into cotton-mills—those receptacles, in too many cases, for living human skeletons, almost disrobed of intellect, where, as the business is often now conducted, they linger out a few years of miserable existence, acquiring every bad habit, which they disseminate throughout Society. It is only since the introduction of this trade, that children, and even grown people, were required to labour more than twelve hours in the day, including the time allotted for meals. It is only since the introduction of this trade that the sole recreation of the labourer is to be found in the pot-house or gin-shop. It is only since the introduction of this baneful trade that poverty, crime, and misery have made rapid and fearful strides throughout the community.”¹

He concluded by urging those present, in approaching the Legislature with an appeal for the remission of the tax, not to forget the interests of those by whom

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol. IA., pp. 16, 17. Owen of course exaggerated the extent of the change for the worse. He shared the common illusion of Socialists, who have always seen the vision of a golden age in the past—a vision which continually recedes as we seek to examine it more closely. There had been poverty, drink, and crime in these islands before the inventions of Crompton and Arkwright; men, women, and children had laboured beyond their strength before the coming of the factory system. But Owen was nevertheless substantially in the right. The long hours and excessive toil had become systematised, and had received toleration, if not actual legal recognition, for the first time under the great industry. Moreover, in the past the children for the most part had worked together with their parents, under their parents' roof, in a common cause and for a bare livelihood: the new system saw the passionless oppression of children forced to labour in the house of a stranger—and to heap up profits in which they had no share.

their profits were made. He suggested that statutory powers should be sought—

(1) To prevent children from being employed in cotton-mills until twelve years of age.

(2) To fix the hours of work at twelve a day, including intervals of one and a half hours for meals—*i.e.* ten and a half hours actual work.

(3) For an educational test before the admission of a child to the mills.

Later in the same year, in a pamphlet, *Observations on the Effect of the Manufacturing System*, Owen expanded the argument of the address. He begins by sketching the rapid development of the industrial system of the country, and the changes it had worked in the conditions of labour and the relations generally between rich and poor. Only a generation ago, he writes, the poorest parents thought the age of fourteen was early enough for their children to begin work, and even that work was performed under reasonable human conditions, which permitted of leisure, recreation, and the enjoyment of home life. Then, too, the old feudal relations between rich and poor still subsisted; they shared to some extent the same surroundings, even the same amusements, and neither could be indifferent to the welfare and happiness of the other. Now all is changed. The poor man “sees all around him hurrying forward, at a mail-coach speed, to acquire individual wealth, regardless of him, his comforts, his wants, or even his sufferings, except by way of a *degrading parish charity*, fitted only to steel the heart of man against his fellows, or to form the tyrant and the slave. To-day he labours for one master, to-morrow for a second, then

for a third and a fourth, until all ties between employers and employed are frittered down to the consideration of what immediate gain each can derive from the other. The employer regards the employed as mere instruments of gain, while these acquire a gross ferocity of character, which, if legislative measures shall not be judiciously devised to prevent its increase, and ameliorate the condition of this class, will sooner or later plunge the country into a formidable and perhaps inextricable state of danger.”¹

As a remedy for the state thus pictured he suggests an Act of Parliament to regulate the conditions of child labour in factories. The provisions of the suggested Act are identical with those already indicated in his speech at the Tontine, except that he now proposes that between ten and twelve years of age children might be employed for six hours a day in the factory, the remaining hours to be spent in school—the modern system of half-timers.

In the pursuance of his campaign, Owen sent copies of his proposals to all the members of both Houses of Parliament,² and subsequently came up to London to interview members of the Government and others. On the question of taxation he was referred to Mr. Nicholas Vansittart (afterwards Lord Bexley), who was then

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol. IA., pp. 40, 41.

² Owen states (*Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 114) that the document thus distributed was the address read at the Glasgow meeting; but it seems more probable that it was the pamphlet published afterwards. The later document is a formal and reasoned appeal for legislation on behalf of the operatives; whereas the address, which deals also with the effects of the tax, was obviously composed with an eye to the particular audience before whom it purports to have been delivered, and contains some rhetorical passages which were omitted from the pamphlet.

Chancellor of the Exchequer. Owen tell us that Vansittart questioned him on the cotton trade, and that the minister "blushed like a sensitive maiden" at some remark which betrayed his own ignorance of the subject—a likely enough incident, for Vansittart by common consent was not a strong finance minister. Owen adds: "The tax was fourpence per pound, and he said he would remit the whole, except to the amount of a small portion of a penny, which he said would be retained for some Government object or arrangement."¹ This statement is not quite accurate. The tax at the beginning of 1815 was 16s. 11d. per 100 lb. (or just 2d. a pound), with an extra 3d. which perhaps stood for registration duty; and it was reduced in the course of the year to 8s. 7d. for cotton imported in British ships, or 1d. the pound + 3d. In other words the special war tax of 8s. 4d. the 100 lb. which had been imposed in 1803 was remitted.²

Owen's efforts on behalf of the children were not so immediately fruitful. The Government expressed themselves as sympathetic, but they would not take up the measure. Owen found much support, however, amongst members of both Houses, amongst whom Lord Lascelles, the eldest son of Lord Harewood, is specially named as having ably seconded Owen's efforts.³ It was ultimately agreed to ask Sir Robert Peel to take charge

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 115.

² See the Chancellor of the Exchequer's speech in the House of Commons March 15, 1815, from which it appears that the war duties were continued on every article except cotton.

³ Lord Lascelles afterwards saw reason to change his mind. For in the debates in the House of Commons in 1818 he is one of the most prominent opponents of the Bill.

of the Bill, and he consented. The choice was a fortunate one. Sir Robert Peel, father of the well-known statesman of that name, and himself the son of a yeoman, had amassed a large fortune from cotton-spinning. In consequence of some abuses which had come to light in his own factory some sixteen or seventeen years before, and which had caused much scandal, he had in 1802 introduced and succeeded in passing into law the "Health and Morals of Apprentices Act" (42 George III. c. 73). The Act applied only to apprentices, *i.e.* children apprenticed from the workhouse—the children of the State—and its chief provisions were to prohibit nightwork and to limit the hours of labour to twelve a day. The Act also made provision for the teaching of reading, writing, and arithmetic, for religious instruction, and for the periodical whitewashing of factories.

The Bill to which Sir Robert Peel, at Owen's instance, undertook to act as foster-father was of much wider scope. First and chiefly, it was to apply, not only to those children who were the special charge of the State, but to all children alike.

It provided (*a*) that no child should be employed in a mill or factory below the age of ten.

(*b*) That no person under eighteen should be employed for more than $12\frac{1}{2}$ hours in the day, of which no more than $10\frac{1}{2}$ might be given to actual work, leaving $1\frac{1}{2}$ for meals and $\frac{1}{2}$ for instruction.

(*c*) The $12\frac{1}{2}$ hours were to be comprised between 5 a.m. and 9 p.m.

(*d*) Instruction was to be given for half an hour a day for the first four years.

(e) The justices were empowered to appoint duly qualified inspectors and to pay them for their services.¹

The Bill was introduced on June 6, 1815, and Peel, in moving the first reading, explained that it was only an experimental measure, not intended to pass that Session. His object in bringing it forward at this time was that it might be printed and circulated for the purposes of discussion and consideration.

Nothing more was done that year, but on April 3 of the following year, 1816, Sir Robert Peel returned to the subject, and moved the appointment of a Committee to take evidence and report upon the state of children employed in manufactories. The motion was accepted, the Committee was appointed, and set itself at once to hear evidence.

In the interval between the introduction of the Bill and the appointment of the Committee in the following year, Owen had proceeded on a tour of inspection throughout England and Scotland, visiting the mills in each town to which he came, for the purpose apparently of collecting evidence to show the need for legislation. On this journey he was accompanied by his eldest son, then a boy of about fifteen. Young Owen was profoundly and permanently impressed by his experiences on this journey;²

¹ I have taken this summary of the chief provisions of the Bill from the draft printed in full in Vol. IA of Owen's Autobiography, pp. 23 *seqq.* But Sir R. Peel in introducing the Bill into the House of Commons is reported (Hansard) as describing provision for 12½ hours, of which ten were to be given to work, and 2½ to meals and instruction.

² See *Threading my Way*, pp. 101, 102. Robert Dale Owen says the journey was undertaken in the summer of 1815, and Owen himself refers (*Evidence*, p. 24) to the journey as having taken place in the previous year, *i.e.* 1815. But he seems to have visited Sidgwick's mill, near Skipton, in April, 1816. (See *Evidence*, p. 381).

and no doubt the travellers, even in this brief visit, saw and heard enough to justify, in the eyes of a more reasonable posterity, the intervention of the strong arm of the law, to enforce what ordinary humanity had failed to persuade. But tactically the journey was probably a mistake. Owen's position as a witness on his own ground was unique and practically unassailable. He had demonstrated in his own factory—and that factory worked under conditions generally reckoned the most adverse, with water, that is, and not steam as the motive-power—that it was possible to shorten the hours of labour and to restrict the employment of young children, and yet to make profits sufficient even for avarice. But for a master manufacturer, however pure his motives, to play the spy on the conditions of working in other factories was an invidious business. And after all, the evidence he collected was of little value for the purpose which he had in view—if indeed he had designed to place it before the Committee of the House of Commons. He could give only the general impressions which he had formed in a hurried inspection of the health or ill-health of the children, the temperature of the rooms, the ages of those employed. And on the last point, and also as regards the hours worked, he was necessarily dependent almost entirely on hearsay evidence.

Owen was the most important witness examined by the Committee of 1816, having appeared before it no fewer than six times, whilst his evidence occupies as much as twenty-four pages of the Blue-book. Much of this evidence has already been cited in previous chapters, and need here only be summarised. He told

the Committee that he employed no children under ten, and would prefer to raise the age of entrance to twelve, allowing the children, however, to work half-time between ten and twelve. The hours worked at New Lanark were ten and three-quarters exclusive of meal-times, and he would like to have them fixed at ten or at most ten and a half a day. Before the age of ten, and for half their time between ten and twelve, he would have the children attend school ; and to ensure their doing so, he would insist upon an adequate educational test—in reading, writing, and arithmetic and, for girls, in sewing also—as a condition of admission to work in a cotton-factory. He did not anticipate, as suggested by various members of the Committee, if the children were not allowed to work until ten years of age, and were called upon to work only ten and a half hours a days after that period, that their abundant leisure would necessarily lead them to become hopelessly idle and vicious. Nor did he regard working-class parents as deficient in natural affections, or admit that the limitation by law of ages and hours of labour for children carried with it that implication.

There is unfortunately no indication of the particular members of the Committee who asked each question ; but it is obvious from the character of the examination that some of the members were strongly hostile to Owen's views, and that he was unscrupulously plied with question after question, in the hope of putting him to confusion. Sometimes it would seem that his opponents succeeded in their aim ; but on the other hand, he occasionally surprises us by replies of unexpected pungency. Thus, when repeatedly and unfairly

pressed as to the number of children under ten years of age then employed in manufactories throughout the Kingdom—a point upon which he of necessity disclaimed any accurate information—he ultimately replied, “I conceive the number would be in exact (*sc.* inverse) proportion to the knowledge which the proprietors have of their own interest, and the interest of the children” (p. 86). Again, after having emphatically expressed his opinion that the health of the children and young people was injured by the long hours which they were compelled to work, he was asked :

“Do you not conceive that it is injurious to the manufacturer to hazard, by overwork, the health of the people he employs?” His reply is brief and to the point : “If those persons were purchased by the manufacturer I should say decisively, ‘yes’ ; but as they are not purchased by the manufacturer, and the country must bear all the loss of their strength and their energy, it does not appear, at first sight, to be the interest of the manufacturer to do so,” *i.e.* to spare them (p. 28).

But Owen was by no means an ideal witness for the cause which he had at heart. There was more than one weak point in his armour, of which his enemies did not fail to take advantage. The evidence which he had collected in the tour of inspection above referred to was not of a kind which would stand critical examination by a committee of experts. His statement, for instance, that he observed a “marked and decided difference in the countenances and conduct of the children” in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where they did not begin work until twelve or fourteen, as compared with the children in Manchester, who had gone to the mills when six or

seven years of age, may or may not have been well-founded, but was not calculated to impress the Committee. And in one case a definite statement of Owen's was authoritatively contradicted. Owen asserted, as a fact within his knowledge, that on the first introduction, in the previous year, of the Bill a number of children under ten years of age had been discharged from mills throughout the country. Pressed to give a particular instance, he named Mr. Sidgwick's mills at Skipton, and stated that he had received information to that effect from the lips of Sidgwick's nephew. At a later date he repeated this statement (pp. 86 and 113). Mr. William Sidgwick, junior, in his examination, read to the Committee contemporary notes of his interview with Owen, written for the information of his uncle, who was absent at the time of Owen's visit. In these notes it is recorded that only one child under ten years of age was at the time of Owen's visit employed at the mill, and no mention is made of any children having been discharged. In his further evidence Mr. Sidgwick expressly denied that any statement to that effect was made by him to Owen, or that any children had been discharged as suggested (pp. 381, 382). It would appear probable, therefore, either that Owen misunderstood something said by Mr. Sidgwick, or that, relying as he apparently did on his memory, he had attached the incident to the wrong place and person—a thing which might easily happen in the course of a tour of some weeks. But the episode no doubt had a damaging effect.¹

¹ The charge in itself was probable enough. There were ugly stories two or three years later of sickly and deformed youths having been hurriedly dismissed from certain Manchester cotton-mills; of the children having been cleaned up and the men ordered to shave; the rooms scoured

Owen was also open to attack in another quarter. His religious views were by this time becoming notorious, and his enemies did not scruple to use the weapon thus placed in their hands. He was questioned as to the religious instruction given to the children at New Lanark ; as to their attendance at Sunday school and at church ; as to their examination in the Bible and Catechism ; and as to his own private religious opinions. Little of this examination appears in the published minutes of evidence (see p. 26). But Owen tells us that he had to submit to a long and vindictive cross-examination from Mr. (afterwards Sir George) Philips, one of the wealthy cotton-spinners on the Committee, on his private opinions and beliefs. The animus was so manifest, and the tone of the questioner so insolent, that Owen's son, who accompanied his father to the meetings of the Committee, was unable to hold back his tears. It appears that on the motion of Lord Brougham the record of this impertinent episode was expunged from the minutes.¹

The part of his evidence, however, which aroused the keenest interest at the time, and later, in the debates in both Houses on the Bill and in the warfare by newspapers and pamphlets outside, gave rise to the most

and the windows opened to reduce the temperature—all in preparation for an inspection of the factories by some medical man selected for the purpose by the proprietors. (See *Evidence before the Lords' Committee of 1819*, pp. 181-216.)

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 121. *Threading my Way*, p. 103. Owen adds that the opponents of the Bill sent emissaries down to New Lanark to interview the parish minister and other persons, with a view of obtaining damaging evidence as to his "infidelity" and other unpopular opinions. Owen probably exaggerated the importance of the enterprise, which in any case seems legitimate enough in political warfare of this kind. At any rate nothing came of it. (See *Autobiography*, Vol. I., pp. 117-20.)

embittered controversy, was that which dealt with the economic effect of the shortened hours of labour. Owen's statements on this point are not very explicit. He moved in a different world from that of the wealthy cotton-spinners who tried to browbeat him before the Committee. Neither he nor his later partners were concerned exclusively with money-getting and the risks of foreign competition. He was profoundly impressed with the evils which the mad race for wealth had already brought upon the workers, and in his publication of January, 1815, already referred to, he had written—"Perish the cotton trade, perish even the political superiority of our country (if it depends on the cotton trade), rather than they shall be upheld by the sacrifice of everything valuable in life by those who are the means of supporting them."¹

When therefore the Committee asked him whether the manufacturers would not be likely to suffer loss in consequence of the shortened hours, he replied with cheerful and indifferent optimism. When questioned, further, what benefits he expected from the measure, he made answer, "A very considerable improvement in the health of the operatives, both young and old; a very considerable improvement in the instruction of the rising generation; and a very considerable diminution in the poor rates of the country."² A man who could so lightly contemplate interference with England's monopoly of the world's markets, for the sake of anything so irrelevant as the honour of the country, or the education

¹ From the speech at the Glasgow Meeting, *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, p. 18.

² See *Evidence*, p. 21.



From a lithograph in the British Museum (undated).

ROBERT OWEN.

and well-being of the children of the poor, was clearly dangerous in the eyes of men who had long ago, in Lord Salisbury's phrase, written these things off their books as unmarketable commodities. At any rate the Committee seem to have judged it best after the last answer to let him alone for the time.

Later, however, they returned to the subject, and Owen was closely questioned as to the exact effects of the shortened hours upon the product of his own mills. The hours at New Lanark had been reduced, it will be remembered, from eleven and three-quarters to ten and three-quarters a day on January 1, 1816, so that at the time of this examination, May 7 of the same year, the new arrangement had only been working for about four months. Owen explained in answer to questions that the difference in the amount produced was much less in proportion than the difference in the hours worked, and according to his calculations "the present loss is not more than one farthing in twenty pence." He added that a daily return of the actual quantity of yarn spun had been kept for years past, and that these returns showed a gradual increase in the produce from January 1 up to the date at which he was speaking. Owen spoke from memory, as he had not got these returns by him at the time, and unfortunately they were not afterwards put in as evidence. Asked how he accounted for the fact that the falling off in the daily product was less proportionately than the reduction in hours of working, he replied that he attributed it to the effect of the shortened hours on the physical and moral well-being of the operatives. Coming to details, he explained that the machinery would be worked at

a higher rate, in proportion as the workpeople were more active and attentive to their duties. He was unable to say whether as a matter of fact the pace of the machinery at New Lanark had been quickened since the beginning of the year. Even without such quickening, however, he considered that "a larger quantity may be produced by a greater attention of the hands while the machinery is at work, in preventing breakage and by not losing any time in commencing in the morning, at meals, or when stopping at night; from the greater desire of the individuals to perform their duty conscientiously; from the great wish to make up for any supposed or probable loss that the proprietors might sustain in consequence of giving this amelioration to the workpeople; such conduct to workpeople is the most likely to make them conscientious, and to obtain more from them than when they are forced to do their duty."¹

The impression produced by his answers is that he had not thought out this aspect of the subject: that he was in fact tolerably indifferent, singular as such a perversion of sentiment must have appeared to his brother manufacturers, to economic niceties of the kind. The mills at any rate produced, and were likely to continue to produce, a surplus sufficiently large to satisfy himself and his new partners; and they were content that the workers should share in the benefit, without enquiring too closely into the balance of profit and loss.²

The Committee of 1816 presented no report to the House, and no further action was taken on the Bill until

¹ *Evidence*, p. 94.

² Some later figures showing the effect of the shortened hours on production are quoted above pp. 164, 165.

1818, when it was again introduced by Sir Robert Peel. Owen ascribes this untimely delay to Sir Robert's desire to conciliate his brother manufacturers ; and Samuel Kydd takes the same view.¹ Sir Robert Peel himself explained the delay as due to his own ill-health ; and it is perhaps not inconsistent with the view held by Owen and Kydd that the opponents of the Bill professed themselves unwilling to accept the plea of ill-health as an adequate explanation of the delay in proceeding with the measure.² At any rate the Bill ultimately passed through the House of Commons in the Session of 1818, the second reading being carried by a majority of 91 to 26.

But when the Bill reached the Upper House their Lordships professed themselves not satisfied that the need for any such restrictive legislation had been made out, and proceeded after some delay to appoint a Committee of their own, which sat and heard evidence in 1818 and the following year.

It is not necessary for our present purpose to enter at length into the history of this piece of legislation, or to analyse the evidence adduced before the Lords' Committee of 1818 and 1819. Owen's personal efforts on behalf of the Bill came to an end with the Committee of 1816, his activities after that year, as will appear in subsequent chapters, being diverted into other channels.³

¹ Owen's *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 116; *History of the Factory Movement*, by "Alfred," Vol. I., p. 44.

² Remarks were made in the House of Commons to this effect. See also Lord Lauderdale's speech in the House of Lords on May 14, 1818.

³ In March, 1818, however, he published two letters, addressed respectively to Lord Liverpool and to British master manufacturers, on the Employment of Children in Factories (*Life*, Vol. I., pp. 185, 197), in which he recapitulated his arguments. His work in this connection was, however, as he tells us, taken up by Gould, Oastler, and others after 1816.

And in any case Owen could give no evidence of value as to the existence of the abuses which the Bill was intended to remedy. The passage of the Bill was stubbornly contested in both Houses and in the outside Press. The arguments of its opponents may be briefly summed up under five main heads.

(1) That no case had been made out for the Bill, and that the majority of masters were already doing of their own free will all that the Bill required.

As regards the prohibition of night-duty, this was probably true. Since the introduction of the steam-engine there was no longer the same necessity for economising the motive-power. Moreover, mills were more commonly erected in large towns, and all-night working had ceased to be fashionable. Owen's neighbour, Finlay, a well-known Glasgow mill-owner, replying to Sir Robert Peel's motion for the appointment of the Committee of 1816, said that in Scotch mills the children did not begin work until ten years of age. But they certainly began much earlier in Lancashire. As to the healthiness of the cotton-factories, the evidence adduced by the masters proved too much. The death-rate in Finlay's mill, for instance, was given as a little over two per thousand. As Peel the younger said in the House, if we were to accept such statistics as relevant, the logical issue would be for the Government to build cotton-mills to act as sanatoria—for the average mill seemed at least six times as healthy as what had hitherto been deemed the most salubrious spots in the Kingdom.¹

(2) The Bill sought to establish a new principle, by intervening between parent and child. It must then

¹ *Hansard*, April 27, 1818.

necessarily weaken the authority of the parents, and cast an undeserved stigma upon them, by accusing them indirectly of avarice and cruelty.¹

(3) England's predominance in the markets of the world would be endangered.

(4) Wages must be reduced *pari passu* with the proposed reduction of the hours—or at an even greater rate to allow of the capitalist recouping himself for the diminished returns from his capital expenditure²—and hence increased poverty and wretchedness would be the direct result of this short-sighted measure.

(5) “All experience proves that in the lower orders the deterioration of morals increases with the quantity of unemployed time of which they have the command.” Thus by shortening the hours of labour, the Bill “necessarily tends to produce immorality and crime among the adults.” Nay, these tender-hearted employers were much concerned for the future of the children themselves, if they should be left in idleness and vice until the mature age of ten, instead of being placed from their earliest years under the wholesome discipline of the factory.³

¹ “The Bill went to say that poor parents were not to be entrusted with the management of their own children.”—Mr. Curwen in the House of Commons.

The Bill would bring disunion between master and workman and between parent and child—“What effect must it have upon a child to perceive that those to whom his interests ought to be most dear were not considered by the Legislature as fit to be trusted with the regulation of his conduct.”—Lord Stanley in the House of Commons, April, 27, 1818.

² *Evidence of 1816*, p. 167.

³ Thus Owen is asked by the Committee of 1816 (*Report*, p. 23), “Would not there be a danger [if the children are not employed in the mills before ten] of their acquiring by that time vicious habits, for want of regular occupation?” This and the other arguments summarised in the text are reproduced

The arguments under the headings (2), (3), and (4) had, it must be admitted, some weight. Everything depended, therefore, upon the evidence adduced to show the need for legislative restriction, and that evidence, to the dispassionate enquirer of a later date, seems conclusive.

(a) As to the age at which the children were employed, a Committee of Manchester mill-owners put before the Lords' Committee of 1818 lists of all the persons employed in their mills, showing in each case the age at the time of the census, the age at entry, and the state of health, etc., of the person employed. These lists, prepared in the interests of the masters, may be supposed to show the case at any rate not at the worst. From an analysis of the figures it appears that of the 4,938 persons employed in these selected mills at the time of the census (about April, 1818), 80 were under nine years of age, 764 between nine and eleven; and 2,896, or nearly three-fifths of the whole number, were still under twenty years of age. Further, of these 4,938 persons, no fewer than 1,658, or one-third of the whole number, had begun work in a cotton-mill below nine years of age, and another third between that age and eleven.¹

again and again in the debates and in the pamphlet literature of the period. The quotation in the text under heading (5) is from an anonymous pamphlet published in London in 1818 entitled *An Inquiry into the Principles and Tendency of the Bill, etc.*, which gives an able and exhaustive statement of the arguments and evidence relied upon by the opponents of legislation.

¹ The figures themselves are given in the appendices to the evidence taken before the Committee of 1818: the summary and analysis given in the text are quoted from an anonymous pamphlet, *Observations as to ages of persons employed in the Cotton Mills in Manchester*, 1819.

(b) As to the hours of duty, Sir Robert Peel stated in moving the appointment of the Committee of 1816, that the hours of work were often fifteen or sixteen a day,¹ and the evidence taken before that and subsequent Committees abundantly confirmed this statement.

In view of these two salient facts—the tender age at which children habitually began to work, and the long hours of confinement in close rooms at a high temperature day after day and year after year, medical evidence as to the effects on health and physique would seem hardly necessary. Nevertheless there were many medical men found to testify, in the interests of the masters, to the healthy nature of the employment. One medical man, Dr. Edward Holme, stated before the Committee of 1818 that he could not say that it would be more injurious for a child to work in the mills by night than in the daytime; nor that the health of young children would be likely to suffer from standing twelve hours a day at their work; nor from eating their meals whilst so standing and working.

Another, Thomas Wilson, did not think it likely to be injurious to the health of a thinly clad child, after working twelve hours in a room at a temperature of seventy-six degrees, to come out into a winter night; nor that the health of the children was likely to suffer from constantly breathing and taking their meals in an atmosphere heavily charged with cotton-fluff; nor that the continual spitting to get rid of the fluff was likely to prove prejudicial.

¹ *Hansard*, April 3, 1816. In fairness to the masters it should be stated that the fifteen or sixteen hours' daily attendance at the factory usually included certain intervals for meals, at any rate for adults. The children were frequently left to clean the machinery in the dinner hour.

More than one witness deposed that the children employed under such conditions in the cotton-mills were as healthy, or healthier than children in any other occupation, not excepting agriculture.¹

But it is scarcely necessary to pursue the subject, or to repeat the evidence in favour of the Bill. An outline of the nature of the facts brought forward in 1816 to prove the injurious effect of the long hours and general conditions of the work upon the health of the children has been already given in Chapter IV. Additional facts and figures of a like nature were adduced before the Committees of 1818 and 1819, to strengthen a case already sufficiently damning. The accumulation of evidence was at length sufficient to satisfy the House of Lords that there was need of legislation. The Bill finally passed into law in the summer of 1819; but its original provisions had been whittled down to conciliate the forces of the opposition. The draft measure of 1815 was intended to apply to "cotton, woollen, flax and other mills." But the Act of 1819 applied to cotton-mills only. The lower limit of age for the employment of children was in the event fixed at nine years, instead of ten, and the children ceased to be "young persons" at sixteen instead of eighteen years of age. The hours of labour of such young persons were to be twelve instead of ten and a half a day, exclusive of meal times. The provision for education was cut out altogether. The masters generally had no desire to work their mills at night, and so the principle

¹ See especially the first sixty pages of evidence tendered before the Lords' Committee of 1818, and evidence of Bingley and Keighley doctors quoted before the Committee of 1816 (*Report*, p. 15).

of working by day only was allowed to pass unchallenged. The hours within which work was permitted were fixed at 5 a.m. to 9 p.m.

But perhaps the most serious alteration from the original draft was in the provision for enforcing the due observance of the law. It was notorious that the Act of 1802 had been in many parts of Great Britain a dead letter, because of the inadequate provision for inspection and the inadequate penalties prescribed. The duty of seeing that the law was obeyed had by that Act been imposed upon visitors appointed by the justices of the peace, one of whom should be a justice and one a clergyman. Naturally many of the mill-owners themselves sat on the bench, and the visiting justice and clergyman were not likely to be too hard on their friends and neighbours, especially as they received no payment for their rather unpleasant duties.

In Scotland the magistrates had gone so far as to disregard the Act of 1802 altogether—the only excuse tendered for non-compliance with the law being that Epiphany and Midsummer, the dates mentioned for the appointment of visitors and the returns, were terms unknown in Scottish procedure. The one exception was Owen's own county of Lanark, and that exception applied only to a single year. In June, 1810, the Quarter Sessions of the Lower Ward of Lanarkshire appointed a visiting committee of eight, who reported a year later that they had inspected several mills, and found that the requirements of the Act as regards periodical whitewashing, the exhibition of a copy of the Act, the hours of labour, and the attendance at divine service,

were not being observed. Thereupon the clerk of the peace was duly empowered, in accordance with the provisions of the Act, to levy upon the offending owners, each of whom was probably making a profit reckoned by thousands or tens of thousands a year, a fine of two guineas!¹

In order that this legislative farce might not be repeated, a clause was inserted in the original draft of 1815 empowering the justices in quarter sessions to appoint any duly qualified persons, not having an interest in the mills, to act as inspectors, and to pay them for their services. In introducing the Bill in 1815 Peel explained to the House that the inspection made under the Act of 1802 had been very remiss, and laid stress upon the necessity for appointing properly qualified and paid inspectors. But in the Act finally passed in 1819 no provision whatever was made for inspection, and the recovery of the penalties prescribed was left to the common informer.

With the sting thus taken out, the Act of 1819 appears to have been little more effective than its predecessor. It was not until 1833, when, under the Act of that year, provision was made for the appointment by the Government of paid inspectors, that it was found practicable to give full effect to the intentions of the Legislature. But the Act of 1819 marks the first—and the most important—step in the long procession of Factory Acts. Under it for the first time the State assumed the rights of parent and guardian

¹ *Account of Cotton and Woollen Mills and Factories . . . entered at the Epiphany Sessions in each year from 1803 to 1818*, H. L., 1819, Vol. XIII.

to the children of the free, and took upon itself to prescribe their hours of work and the general conditions of their labour. Of the long struggle that followed, decade after decade almost down to our own day, there is no need to speak here. Owen had no share in the later legislation.

But it may be claimed for him that he first forced the State to open its eyes to the new duties which the changing circumstances of the time were thrusting upon it: that he was in fact the pioneer of factory legislation in this country. The record on this point is clear; though, as with his services to the cause of education, Owen's own later career has obscured the fame which is his due. We have seen, first, what measures he had taken, as soon as his hands were free, to lighten the labours of the children in his own mills at New Lanark. We have seen, next, that in his speech at Glasgow in January, 1815, and in his pamphlet published later in the same year, he proposed legislation on the precise lines afterwards embodied in the Bill introduced by Sir Robert Peel in the House of Commons in June, 1815. That Owen was directly responsible for the drafting of that Bill, and for its introduction by Peel, is sufficiently proved by the numerous references to him in the debates and in the outside press. The friends of the Bill were silent, indeed, except when directly challenged, on Owen's share in the matter; but its opponents were proportionately insistent upon giving him the credit of the measure.

The reason is obvious. When, in 1815, Owen first commenced the agitation on the subject, he was known to the world as a philanthropic mill-owner, and an

enthusiast in the cause of popular education ; a man who preached social reform, and who gave unsparingly of his time and means in order to practise what he preached. But when the Bill came before the House for serious consideration in 1818, Owen's name unfortunately stood for something more than this. He had shocked the conventionally religious by his fervid denunciation of all the creeds ; and by the extravagance of his remedies for social evils he had repelled the sympathies of many whose religious prejudices were unaffected. Lord Lascelles, therefore, in opposing the Bill,¹ thought it well to remind the House that the measure did not originate with Sir Robert Peel, but with a gentleman who had for the last twelve months "made much noise in the public prints," and who had said, from his own experience at New Lanark, that a reduction in the hours of labour, so far from diminishing the product rather tended to increase it—a proposition beyond Lord Lascelles' powers of comprehension. Peel the younger in replying urged that Lascelles ought not to oppose the Bill because a gentleman with speculative opinions in political economy was supposed to have brought it forward. "Whether that gentleman was concerned in it or not was a matter of indifference to him (the speaker) and he called upon the House not to reject a judicious measure, because it might have the misfortune to be supported by an indiscreet advocate."²

Again, in the House of Lords on February 25, 1819, the Earl of Lauderdale, in opposing the Bill, said that

¹ *Hansard* for April 27, 1818, p. 351.

² *Loc. cit.*, p. 352.

“ Sir Robert Peel had never thought of this measure until Mr. Owen had recommended it to him.”¹

Again, the writer of a pamphlet against the Bill, already quoted, says : “ Late years have been wonderfully prolific of ostentatious and useless schemes of philanthropy, from Member Evans and his nation of happy landholders, to Mr. Owen with the Millennium dawning over the ruins of Christianity in a cotton-mill.” The Bill “ is in truth a part of Mr. Owen’s dreams ; he was its father, though Sir Robert Peel has graciously become its god-father and taken upon himself the discharge of the parental duties. Such a descent might justify us in expecting a few extravagances in the child, but the reality has far exceeded our expectations.”²

And though Owen in later years forsook the battlefield, and betook himself to a cloudy land where the laws of political economy do not operate, it should not be forgotten that the first victory in the long campaign was due to him, so far at least as any achievement of the kind can be credited to the efforts and example of any single man.³

¹ *Hansard, loc. cit.*, p. 655.

² *An Inquiry into the Principles and Tendency of the Bill, etc.*, London, 1818, p. 31.

³ Owen was actually the occasion of another minor piece of factory legislation. On November 26, 1819, one of the mills at New Lanark was burnt down (*Times*, December 2, 1819). On December 7, Sir R. Peel introduced a Bill to allow of working by night in cotton-factories so as to prevent loss of employment, after a fire or other accident. Lord A. Hamilton and Finlay both taunted the mover with introducing the Bill specially to meet Owen’s case. The Bill passed into law in the following year (60 George III. c. 5).

CHAPTER X

FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

IN July, 1815, the long war came to an end. But peace did not at once bring plenty to these islands. Throughout the twenty years of war Great Britain had held the lion's share of the carrying trade and the commerce of the world. Her crafts and manufactures had thriven on the distress and poverty of the Continent : her wares had almost monopolised the European market. But now all this was changed. The Continental industries revived, and Britain's foreign trade was proportionately curtailed. Further, the island labour market was disturbed by the sudden disbandment of the huge military and naval forces, and the return to domestic industries of some 200,000 able-bodied men. Thus a shrinking market coincided with an enormous influx of unskilled labourers. It is not to be wondered at that wages rapidly fell and that distress and hunger were felt throughout the land for some years to come.

Wages fell most rapidly in agriculture and in the textile trades : in some cases they were reduced in a twelvemonth to less than half their former amount. Thus the wages of weavers in Bolton fell from 14s. in 1815 to 12s. in 1816 and 9s. in 1817 ; in Forfarshire they fell from 13s. in 1815 to 6s. in 1817 ; and in

Glasgow during the same period from 11s. 6d. to 5s. 6d. Exact particulars of the wages of agricultural labourers are more difficult to ascertain, because at this time the less than living wage paid by the farmer was commonly supplemented out of the poor rates. But near Glasgow the wages of labourers fell from 11s. a week in 1816 to 7s. 6d. in 1819; in Middlesex they remained at 15s. until 1818, and fell rapidly after that year until they stood at 10s. in 1822.¹ To add to the disturbance of industrial conditions and general distress which the conclusion of the war must inevitably have brought in its train, the summer of 1816 proved exceptionally wet, and the price of corn rose rapidly. It had stood at 63s. a quarter in 1815; it rose in 1816 to 76s., and in the following year to 94s. Concurrently the gross amount of the poor rates, which had been, in round numbers, £5,400,000 in 1815, rose in 1817 to £6,900,000, and in 1818 to £7,870,000.² Numbers of people were thrown out of employment and reduced to penury and starvation. Owen tells us that though he was able to keep the mills at New Lanark working, he had to turn away daily many applicants for work whom he was unable to help.

In the private correspondence of the period, in debates in the House of Commons, in the evidence before the Poor Law Committee of 1817, we read of many parishes where considerably more than half the inhabitants were on the poor rates: of poor rates exceeding 20s. in the pound: of farms which no man would cultivate even rent free: of cottages abandoned, of whole parishes

¹ See the tables given in Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, edition of 1851, pp. 444, 445.

² *Ibid.*, p. 90.

deserted, of homeless people worn with hunger wandering over the country in search of work.

There were disturbances, demonstrations, rick-burnings, and smashing of machinery throughout the country. Five men were hanged in 1816 for riots at Ely. At the end of the same year there was a turbulent meeting in Spa Fields. The mob broke into a gunsmith's shop in Snow Hill, possessed themselves of the fire-arms, and threatened the city. The riot was suppressed by the police; the ringleaders were tried for high treason and acquitted. Meanwhile the newly christened Radicals, led by Major Cartwright, Cobbett, Hone, Wooler, Hunt and others, were demanding universal suffrage, annual parliaments, and reform of the parliamentary machinery generally. The Government became alarmed at the disturbed state of the country and the general agitation for reform; at the growth of the Hampden and the Spencean Clubs, and other political organisations. Select Committees of both Houses of Parliament sat early in 1817 to consider the state of the country. The Habeas Corpus Act was suspended and several repressive Acts were passed, of which the chief aimed at suppressing as far as possible the right of public meeting.

Such, then, was the state of the country and the temper of the public mind in 1816 and 1817, when Robert Owen first promulgated his scheme of social salvation. He was known to the world as a successful manufacturer, who had done much to improve the processes of fine-cotton spinning: a hard-headed man of business, who had for a score of years conducted large industrial concerns at enormous profit to himself and

his partners. He stood high, too, in the business world as a man of sterling honesty, who was unwilling to be too sharp in a bargain, or to take advantage of a customer's ignorance. Macnab tells us that it was Owen's habitual practice when he foresaw a fall in the price of yarn, to ask his customers whether they would not wish any orders which might be in hand to be deferred so that they might take advantage of the lower prices; and in the same way, he would write to his correspondents before a rise, and urge them to buy.¹

Further he was known as a man of liberal views who had given much of his time and money to improving the condition of those who worked under him. And he was this very year, 1816, giving important evidence before two Committees of the House of Commons, on popular education and on the state of children in factories. Such a man was sure of a respectful hearing for any views which he might put forward.

In the summer of 1816 a public meeting was convened by the Association for the Relief of the Manufacturing and Labouring Poor, under the presidency of the Duke of York, to consider measures for the relief of the prevalent distress. Owen had breakfasted on the day of the meeting with one of his episcopal friends, Bathurst, Bishop of Norwich, and was entrusted by his host, who was unable himself to attend the meeting, with a subscription of ten pounds for the fund which was to be raised. The meeting appointed a committee, under the chairmanship of the Archbishop of Canterbury, to consider practical measures of relief, and Owen's name was naturally placed on the list of members.

¹ *Macnab*, p. 131.

The committee met next day, and, after many economists and public men had spoken on the subject, the chairman, who, as we have already seen, was acquainted with Owen and his views, invited him also to address the meeting. Owen having at that time little experience in public speaking, felt, as he tells us, considerable reluctance in complying with the request. But he had reflected to some purpose on the subject, and he seems to have acquitted himself well. His speech insisted upon two points: that the immediate occasion of the distress was the sudden cessation of the extraordinary demand created by the war, or in his own words—"on the day on which peace was signed the great customer of the producers died":¹ and that the permanent underlying cause was the displacement, within the past generation, of human labour by machinery. Pressed to state his remedy for this state of things, Owen consented to draw up a report and present it to a later meeting of the committee. The report was completed in the spring of the following year, and Owen duly presented it to the Archbishop's committee, and outlined the nature of his proposals. In the meantime, however, a Select Committee, under the chairmanship of Sturges Bourne, had been appointed by the House of Commons to report on the administration of the Poor Laws, and had actually commenced to take evidence in February, 1817. The subject-matter of Owen's report appeared more germane to the enquiries of the Select Committee, and Owen was requested to present it to that body. He accordingly offered himself, through Brougham, who was himself a member, as a witness before the Committee. A day,

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 124.

as he tells us, was appointed for his examination : but after long deliberation the Committee finally decided not to take his evidence.

This Report, which was presented to the Select Committee in a covering letter dated 49, Bedford Square,¹ London, March 12, 1817, contains the first sketch of Robert Owen's celebrated "Plan" for the regeneration of the world. It purports to be simply a development of the proposals already put forward in the *New View of Society* for the provision by the State of useful work for the unemployed. But it is, as will be seen, a development on lines which could scarcely have been foreseen by any reader of the earlier essays.

The Report begins by enlarging the argument of Owen's speech before the Archbishop's committee. The ultimate cause of the distress, he claimed, was the displacement of human labour by machinery. In Great Britain alone, he contended, machinery represented the labour of more than a hundred millions "of the most industrious human beings"; and as machinery was far cheaper in the working, it must, in the nature of things, continually tend to displace more and more the merely human labourer. Either therefore we must curtail the use of machinery, or we must suffer millions of our fellow-countrymen to starve to death; or, finally, "Advantageous occupation must be found for the poor and unemployed working classes, to whose labour mechanism must be rendered subservient, instead of being applied, as at present, to supersede it."²

¹ The town-house of Owen's partner, Mr. Walker (see *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 180).

² *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, p. 55.

The poor, however, are, he points out, already seriously demoralised by enforced ignorance and idleness ; and any plan devised for the permanent amelioration of their condition must include measures for educating all, and especially the children, in good and useful habits. Such a plan must, then, “combine means to prevent their children from acquiring bad habits, and to give them good ones—to provide useful training and instruction for them—to provide proper labour for the adults—to direct their labour and expenditure so as to produce the greatest benefit to themselves and to society ; and to place them under such circumstances as shall remove them from unnecessary temptations, and closely unite their interest and duty.”¹

Obviously, to secure superintendence which should be at once effective and economical, the establishment must not be very small, for then the cost of superintendence would be relatively high ; nor very large, for then it would cease to be effective. In practice an establishment consisting of from 500 to 1,500 persons would, Owen indicates, be most suitable.

The Report was accompanied by a drawing, to which the attention of the Committee was to have been directed, representing one of the proposed establishments, with its appendages and a suitable quantity of land. The main building is represented as a large quadrangle, of which three sides were to be occupied by tenements or flats, of four rooms each, each room to accommodate a married couple and two children. The fourth side comprised dormitories for all the children above three years of age,

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol. 1A, p. 57.



From an engraving after a drawing by R. R. Reinagle. R.A.

A VIEW OF ONE OF MR OWEN'S VILLAGES OF UNION.

an infirmary, and a guest-house. The buildings in the middle of each of the other three sides of the quadrangle contained apartments for the superintendents, school-masters, clergymen, surgeons, and for store-rooms, etc. A row of buildings in the centre, dividing the quadrangle into two equal parts, contained accommodation for kitchens, dining-rooms, schools, lecture-room, and a place for public worship. The space within the quadrangle was to be planted with trees and laid out as gardens and playgrounds.

Other gardens surrounded the quadrangle on the outside, and beyond these were the stables, laundries, manufactories, and farm buildings, all duly represented on the plan. This model establishment was designed to accommodate 1,200 persons, "men, women, and children, of all ages, capacities, and dispositions; most of them very ignorant; many with bad and vicious habits, possessing only the ordinary bodily and mental faculties of human beings, and who require to be supported out of the funds appropriated to the maintenance of the poor—individuals who are at present not only useless and a direct burden on the public, but whose moral influence is highly pernicious. . . ." ¹

It was intended that the community should be, as far as possible, self-sufficing; and for this purpose its members were to engage in various branches of manufacture as well as in agriculture. All were to work at suitable tasks, according to their ability, except that the children were to attend school the first few years of life, and only gradually take part in manual labour, working as half-timers in the first instance.

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, p. 59.

The estimated expenditure is shown in the following table—

SCHEDULE OF EXPENSES FOR FORMING AN ESTABLISHMENT FOR
1,200 MEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN.

If the land be purchased.

| | £ |
|---|-----------------------|
| 1,200 acres of land at £30 per acre | 36,000 |
| Lodging apartments for 1,200 persons | 17,000 |
| Three public buildings within the square | 11,000 |
| Manufactory, slaughter-house, and washing-house | 8,000 |
| Furnishing 300 lodging-rooms, at £8 each | 2,400 |
| Furnishing kitchen, schools, and dormitories | 3,000 |
| Two farming establishments, with corn-mill, and malting and brewing appendages | 5,000 |
| Making the interior of the square and roads | 3,000 |
| Stock for the farm under spade cultivation | 4,000 |
| Contingencies and extras | 6,600 |
| | £96,000. ¹ |

Or the land might be rented, in which case a capital sum of £60,000 would suffice. The necessary capital might be furnished by private subscription; or, by the parochial authorities; or, best of all, by the central Government. Of the financial success of such establishments Owen had no doubt, though he dismisses the point in an airy sentence—"Thus the unemployed poor may be put in a condition to maintain themselves and, as may be easily conceived, quickly to repay the capital advanced, if thought necessary."

The adoption of the plan is urged upon the Government as the best solution of the problem of the unemployed; as the simplest and most effectual method for giving a real education to the children of the poor; as a means of enabling a much greater population to be

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, p. 60.

supported in a given area than under any other conditions ; and finally as being "so easy, that it may be put into practice with less ability and exertion than are necessary to establish a new manufacture in a new situation."¹

Such is the famous "Plan" as originally sketched out in the Report offered to the committee on the Poor Laws. It will be seen that it purports to be little more than a scheme for finding employment for those who could not find it for themselves ; and for educating the children of those who could not themselves pay the cost of schooling. In other words it aimed at carrying out what appears to have been the intention of the Elizabethan Poor Laws.² As a great part of the Select Committee's Report is given up to showing the disastrous results which must follow from the State undertaking the duty of finding work for all, their reluctance to entertain a scheme of this nature, holding out such magnificent promises, and so careless of the cost of their fulfilment, can be readily understood.

Frustrated in the attempt to gain publicity for his views through the Committee, Owen had recourse to the press. The Report was printed in full in No. XXV. of the *Philanthropist*, a periodical edited by his partner William Allen. It also appeared in the *Times* and the *Morning Post* of April 9, 1817, occupying in each case several columns of the paper. The *Times* refers to the scheme as a substitute for the system of English Poor Laws, and expresses doubt of its practicability on the ground of the expense involved. On May 29 the *Times*

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, p. 64.

² See *Report of the Select Committee of 1817*, pp. 16-18.

published a further letter from Owen vindicating his proposals. The tone of the editorial on this occasion is decidedly more encouraging. The writer points out that "Mr. Owen is not a theorist only, but a man long and practically familiarised to the management of the poor : we are most desirous that a trial should be made of his plan in at least one instance." The *Morning Post* is even more friendly. It refers to Owen as "a real patriot and exemplary philanthropist," and in its issue of May 5, contrasts Owen's scheme favourably with a proposal put forward by Mr. Curwen, M.P., for the establishment of universal Savings Banks. On July 24 a small meeting of rich merchants and others was summoned by special invitation to the "George and Vulture," a City tavern, to hear Owen expound his plans for the employment of the poor ; and a committee was formed to consider the scheme and collect subscriptions.¹ On the day following the meeting Owen began to write a long letter, which was published in the *Times* on the 30th of that month, and occupies just over five columns of close print in that journal. A short leader calling attention to the letter deprecates the illiberal attacks of a personal nature which had been made upon "this ardent philanthropist." These attacks, which appear to have been directed against his religious views, were barely noticed by Owen.² But he sets himself to answer in detail other objections which had been or might

¹ See the report in the *Times*, July 25, 1817.

² In his letter published in the *Times* of May 29, Owen had mentioned that his friend Mr. Southey had attacked his plan as not being founded on religion. Owen in reply contents himself with saying that "he understands true religion to be devoid of all sectarian notions," and that in his proposed establishments there would be full liberty for each to worship as he chose.

be made to the scheme, by means of an imaginary cross-examination, in which he naturally rides triumphant over all the arguments of his adversary. But the ghostly catechist does not put the one question which must have first suggested itself to any critic of flesh and blood—what will the scheme cost? There is no reference to this crucial point beyond a few casual assurances to encourage the doubters, such as “they will then [*sc.*, after establishing their own material and moral welfare] proceed to create that surplus which will be necessary to repay the interest of the capital expended in the purchase of the establishment,” and again, “every shilling . . . will return five per cent. interest for the capital expended.”

But apart from this noteworthy omission—noteworthy, above all, in one who had proved himself a successful man of business—Owen states fairly enough the main objections commonly urged against such a scheme as his, and his answers, if not convincing to the average sensual man, are informed with a kind of celestial common sense which was certainly more inspiring than the classical economy of the period; and, perhaps, in the last analysis not much more remote from the facts of human nature.

Thus when the ghostly catechist asks:—“But will men in a community of mutual and combined interests be as industrious as when employed for their individual gain?” Owen replies that where the experiment has been tried men have been found to work with more enthusiasm for their common interest, than for the sole profit of a master; and further that it would be easy on his method to instil into the children the principles of industry and zeal for the common good.

Again, the catechist asks, "Will not your model village of co-operation produce a dull uniformity of character?" And Owen replies, "No, for men brought up from birth in circumstances so favourable would become not a dull uniform race, but beings full of health, activity, and energy, with ample leisure, and such freedom from petty cares and restrictions as would enable them to develop to the full their noblest powers."

Again, the question is asked, "But should many of these villages be founded, will they not increase the products of agricultural and manufacturing labour, which are already too abundant, until no market can be found for them, and thus injure the present agriculture, manufactures, and commerce of the country?"

And the reply is given: "Is it possible that there can be too many productions desirable and useful to society? and is it not to the interest of all, that they should be produced with the least expense and labour, and with the smallest degree of misery and moral degradation to the working classes; and, of course, in the greatest abundance to the higher classes, in return for their wealth? It is surely to the interest of all, that everything should be produced with the least expense of labour, and so as to realise the largest portion of comfort to the producing classes."

Once more the catechist asks, "Will not these establishments tend to increase population, beyond the means of subsistence, too rapidly for the well-being of society?"

Owen's reply to this, the most searching objection, probably, of all which he had to meet, is in effect that

the fear of population overtaking the means of subsistence is a chimera, arising entirely out of the faulty arrangements of existing society. Land, labour, and capital under proper direction may be made to produce fourfold what they do at present. Each labourer could readily produce food which would amount to more than ten times his own consumption, and the fear of overpopulation might be deferred until such time as the whole surface of the earth is one cultured garden-plot.¹

In a postscript to this letter, already of portentous length, Owen describes a visit which he had paid the previous day (July 25, 1817) to Newgate. He was much impressed with the effect produced by the labours of Elizabeth Fry and her associates on the female inmates. Amongst the women he found order, cleanliness, good habits, and even some degree of comfort and cheerfulness. On the male side, where no such beneficent influence had been exerted, he finds the men and boys hopeless, degraded, and looked upon by all who had to do with them as utterly irreclaimable. And yet a few months before his visit the women, as he was assured by the prison officials, had seemed as completely lost to all sense of decency, as completely wanting in the ordinary social instincts, as wretched and as hopeless as the men.

¹ It has been stated by G. J. Holyoake (*Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life*, Vol. I., p. 129) that Owen at a later period changed his views on the population question and became an advocate of prudential restriction on families. Holyoake gives no reference to Owen's published writings in support of his statement, and I can find no evidence for it. It is certain that when he wrote the *Book of the New Moral World*, some twenty years later, Owen still held the view that restrictions on the growth of population were unnecessary (*see below*, Chapter xxi.). Robert Dale Owen, however, became noted as an exponent of neo-Malthusian views.

Owen draws the obvious moral, that human nature is plastic to good influences as well as to bad ones: and that if these wretched prisoners had sinned, the blame is not theirs but that of the community. Here, said he, I saw a boy only sixteen years of age, in double irons. A great crime had been committed, but—my Lord Sidmouth¹ will forgive me—it is he who ought to have been double-ironed in place of the boy.

In a second letter, which occupied one entire page of the *Times* on August 9, Owen contrasts in detail the numerous advantages of life in his proposed villages as compared with the present conditions of existence of the poor in manufacturing towns, leading up to the conclusion “that the manufacturing towns are the abode of poverty, vice, crime and misery, while the proposed villages will ever be the abode of abundance, active intelligence, correct conduct, and happiness.”²

These two letters precluded an address delivered in the “City of London Tavern” on August 14, 1817, in which Owen further developed and defended his plan. The address is remarkable for the extraordinary confidence which the speaker displays that by his way, and by his way only, can social salvation be found. Never was inspired prophet more sure of the faith that was in him: and never, it may be added, did prophet display a more exasperating tolerance towards those who differed from him.

“The principles and plan are even now so fixed and permanent, that hereafter the combined power of the

¹ Then Home Secretary.

² *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, p. 92.

world will be found utterly incompetent to extract them from the public mind. It will from this hour go on with an increasing celerity. 'Silence will not retard its course, and opposition will give increased celerity to its movements.'"¹

In concluding his address he moved a series of resolutions proposing the appointment of a committee to investigate the plan, and calling for subscriptions to start an experimental colony forthwith. In order to encourage the rest, he added that he had just received from a donor who wished to remain anonymous, the offer of 1,500 acres of land suitable for the purposes of a colony.

Such is the famous Plan, the promulgation of which marks the beginning of modern Socialism. It is to be noted that, as originally presented in the Report to the Select Committee on the Poor Laws, Owen's scheme purported to aim simply at finding productive work for the unemployed poor. From the two letters, however, published in the newspapers on July 30 and August 9 respectively, and from the address delivered in the "London Tavern" a few days later, it is apparent that Owen's views have developed. He is now confident that when the experiment had once fairly started, the whole civilised world would gladly barter the cumbrous machinery of modern social life for the chance of living in these happy villages: "When Society shall discover its true interests it will permit these new establishments gradually to supersede" all other arrangements (p. 74). He himself looks forward to ending his days as "an undistinguished member of one of these happy villages," living upon

¹ *Autobiography* Vol. IA, p. 101.

twenty pounds a year and earning it.¹ The change will be effected easily and naturally. "No difficulty or obstacle of magnitude will be found in the whole progress. *The world knows and feels the existing evil: it will look at the new order of things proposed—approve—will the change—and it is done*" (p. 84).

But though Owen no longer conceals his belief that such an entire social reconstruction is inevitable in the near future, in more than one passage he deprecates any undue haste in carrying out the plan, or premature disturbance of existing institutions. Thus, "To accomplish, however, this great end, without injury to any one, it is absolutely necessary that all the existing institutions should be supported for a time, as they are; to enable them to protect, and beneficially to direct and control, the mighty change which is coming rapidly upon us and upon all nations; from which it is utterly impossible for us to escape; and from which, when it shall be properly understood, not one of us shall desire to escape" (p. 87).

Owen expressly disclaims originality for his plan—and indeed the attempt to apportion credit for originality in new ideas of any kind is apt to be unprofitable. Nevertheless an enquiry into the pedigree of ideas is always interesting, and often leads to results historically valuable. It is clear, to begin with, that Owen's scheme for regenerating mankind by dividing them into small communities, of about one thousand to two thousand persons apiece, and subjecting them to a wise paternal government, had its roots deep in his own personal history. New Lanark was for him the microcosm in which the discerning eye might trace the outlines of the

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, p. 102.

larger cosmos. In his original report, he writes of the plan—

“I beg to submit it as the result of daily experience among the poor and working classes, on an extensive scale, for twenty-five years” (p. 51).

There were not wanting precedents at that time for solving the problem of the poor by means of parochial houses of industry. Several schemes of the kind are described in the Report of the Committee of 1817. Thus the paupers of the Isle of Wight were collected into a House of Industry at Newport, which had some seventy acres of garden, arable, and grass land attached, the whole of which was cultivated by the labours of the paupers themselves. All the vegetables used were supplied by the garden; but the corn was sold in the outside market, as the most economical arrangement. There was further a small manufactory attached to the poorhouse: the paupers made all their own clothes, shoes, and linen, and manufactured also sacks and other articles the sale of which produced a net profit of £150 to £200 a year.¹ We hear also of similar Houses of Industry in Suffolk, with land attached to them,² and we have a detailed account of two parochial farms in Kent, at Benenden and Cranbrook. In the latter case, the farm, which consisted of 448 acres, had been in the occupation of the parish authorities for more than 21 years. Wheat, hops, potatoes, and turnips were grown, and part of the land was laid down in grass. There was a fair amount of live-stock. In October, 1816, there were 88 paupers in the farm-house, of whom 24 were children, and all who were able found work of one kind or another on

¹ *Report*, pp. 95-102.

² *Ibid.*, p. 165.

the farm. The wheat grown was sufficient in good years to supply all the needs of the establishment ; the hogs yielded 400 stone of pork a year ; and generally, the farm supplied nearly the whole subsistence of the people.¹

So widespread, indeed, at this time was the belief that it was the duty of those who administered the poor rates to provide productive employment for all those who could not obtain it in the outside market, that, as already said, the Committee of 1817 found it necessary to argue against such an interpretation of the Statutes. The circumstances of the time thus made it natural that Owen should look to the organisation of small self-sufficing communities working on the land as the proper solution of the problem of the unemployed.

Again, the parochial occupation of the land had been brought prominently before the public for many years from another quarter. Thomas Spence,² born at Aberdeen in 1750, was in 1775 earning his living as a schoolmaster in Newcastle-on-Tyne. It happened in that year that the Corporation of Newcastle had enclosed part of the Town Moor and let it off in small farms. The freemen of the borough claimed the rent as their property, carried their claim to the law courts, and were successful. This victory set Spence thinking, and in the November of this same year, 1775, he read a paper before the Newcastle Philosophical Society, "On the mode of administering the landed estates of the Nation

¹ *Report*, pp. 163-5.

² See *Memoir of T. Spence*, from Mackenzie's *History of Newcastle*, 1826 ; *The Rights of Man*, as exhibited in a lecture read to the Philosophical Society of Newcastle, 4th edition, 1793 ; also *Land for the Landless : Spence and Spence's plan*, by J. Morrison Davidson, 1896 ; *Precursors of Henry George*, by the same, 1904.

as a Joint Stock property in Parochial Partnership by dividing the rent." In this paper Spence sought to demonstrate that the land belonged by inalienable right to all the inhabitants of the country ; and that the people might most conveniently resume possession of their inheritance through the existing parochial machinery—each parish, after due notice, taking charge of the land within its boundaries and administering it as a common estate for the benefit of all the parishioners. Being expelled from the Philosophical Society, and apparently finding Newcastle too small to hold him and his views, Spence came up to London and started a bookseller's shop in Chancery Lane, the rest of his life being spent in disseminating the knowledge of his Plan, by means of copper tokens, pamphlets, and various periodicals, of which *Pig's Meat, or Lessons for the Swinish Multitude*, is the best known. Spence naturally during his life paid a good many visits to prison ; and after his death in 1814 fear of the Spencean Clubs, which were founded to carry on his propaganda, was one of the main causes which led the Government in 1817 to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act.

Now though Spence's methods and premises were widely different from Owen's, and though the objects aimed at were by no means identical, for Spence desired to do justice to the whole people, not to dispense charity to the unemployed poor, yet there was sufficient similarity between the two plans to make it probable that the later reformer was to some extent indebted to his predecessor. The limits of Owen's ideal community were about those of a fair-sized village, and he constantly suggests that his community might conveniently be

started by the action of the parish authorities. At any rate to contemporaries the resemblance was sufficiently striking for Owen's name to be generally coupled with that of Spence. Thus the editor of the *Black Dwarf*, in commenting on the address of August 14, hails Owen as the successor of Spence, and marvels that whilst poor old Spence had been put in prison, and some of his followers were even then sharing the same fate, Owen "advertises his Spencean plan throughout the country" and has the ministers on his committee.¹

But Owen has himself indicated the examples which most directly influenced his views. He had been much impressed by the accounts which had reached England of the extraordinary material prosperity achieved by the celibate religious communities of America. Of one of the best-known of these sects, that of the Shakers, Owen published a Sketch in 1818, including with it in the same volume Bellers's tract referred to below, his own Report of March, 1817, and his subsequent letters and speeches on the subject.² Some account of a less-known community, that of the Rappites, in Pennsylvania, had also appeared in this country a year or two before. An American traveller, John Melish, had visited the settlement in 1810 or 1811 and had written a fervid description of the goodfellowship and material well-being which he found there. The book had been reviewed at length in the *Philanthropist* in 1815, and it is tolerably certain that Owen had seen the review, if he had not actually read Melish's book. In his letter

¹ *Black Dwarf*, Vol. I. (1817), p. 468.

² *New View of Society: Tracts relative to this subject, etc.*, by Robert Owen. London, 1818.

to the *Times* of May 29, in defending his plan from the charge of being impracticable, he writes that the feasibility of such a scheme "is partly exemplified by the conduct of a large body of persons in the State of Pennsylvania¹ who became associated together on the principles of combined labour and expenditure, and who by their experience of about ten years have discovered that the benefits in practice far exceed their most sanguine expectations."

But it was a seventeenth-century English writer who furnished the actual model for the villages of co-operation and unity. In his letter of July 25, after disclaiming originality for the principles on which his plan was founded, on the ground that they had been advanced by great thinkers long before him, Owen adds, "I have no claim even to priority in regard to the combinations of these principles in theory; this belongs as far as I know, to John Bellers, who published them, and most ably recommended them to be adopted in practice, in the year 1696."²

Bellers's pamphlet, which, as already said, was reprinted by Owen in 1818, bears the title "Proposals for raising A Colledge of Industry of all useful Trades and Husbandry, &c.," by John Bellers, London, 1696.³ In the introduction the author defines his aim as threefold: "First, Profit for the rich, (which will be life to the rest).

¹ Rapp's Colony had originally started in 1804 near Zehenople in Pennsylvania, and subsequently, in 1815, removed to the site in Indiana on the banks of the Wabash, which was afterwards known as New Harmony.

² *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, p. 76 (cf. Vol. I., p. 240).

³ It is reprinted in Owen's *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, pp. 155-181. There is a copy of the tract in the British Museum.

Secondly, A plentiful living for the poor without difficulty. Thirdly, A good education for youth, that may tend to prepare their souls into the nature of the good ground." Broadly his proposal is to found a self-sufficing community, consisting in the first instance of some three hundred persons. The necessary land and capital, which he estimates for a community of that size at £18,000, is to be found by a joint stock association, each member of which should have a share in the profits, and a vote in the government, in proportion to his subscription. But while the government of the college was to be vested solely in the rich men who found the money, and all surplus profits were to be divided amongst them, the first charge on the estate should be the maintenance in comfort of the workers, and the education of their children. As to the first point, Bellers estimates that the labour of 200 men, women, and children would be sufficient to provide food, clothing, and whatever else might be required for all the 300 members, leaving the labour of the other 100 to supply the profit on the capital invested. In order to make the community self-sufficing he furnishes a table of the trades which should be included, and the number which should be assigned to each—thus, 3 tailors, 1 baker, 1 brewer, 4 cooks, 6 nurses, 3 ploughmen, 3 shepherds, 20 linen and 20 woollen spinners and carders, and so on. There will be no need of money in the community. "This colledge-fellowship will make labour, and not money, the standard to value all necessaries by; and though money hath its conveniences, in the common way of living, it being a pledge among men for want of credit; yet not without its mischiefs. . . . Money in the body

politic, is what a crutch is to the natural body, crippled ; but when the body is sound, the crutch is but troublesome : So when the particular interest is made a publick interest, in such a colledge money will be of little use there."

But though money will have no place within the college walls, the rich, in addition to receiving the interest on their capital, may if they so choose, live in the college, or they may buy a "college commons" for any child for whom they wish to provide a decent living. As to the poor, they will benefit by the scheme yet more abundantly : "From being poor, they will be made rich, by enjoying all things needful in health or sickness, single or married, wife and children ; and if parents die, their children well educated, and preserved from misery, and their marrying encourag'd, which is now generally discourag'd."

To secure this safe competence and complete freedom from care, many workmen, Bellers thinks, would prefer life in the college to the prospect of much better wages outside.

Lastly, the children are to be educated. And on the question of education Bellers's views are remarkably sound, and curiously like Owen's own : "Tho' rules, as well as words, must be understood to make a complete scholar, yet considering words lie in the memory, and rules in the understanding ; and that children have first memory before understanding ; by that nature shows that memory is to be first used ; and that in the learning of language, words should be first learned, and afterwards rules to put them together ; children first learning the words of their mother-tongue, and then sentences ; . . .

And therefore I think vocabulary and dictionary is to be learnt before accidence and grammar ; and children's reading and discoursing one to another, give a deeper impression than reading to themselves." And again, "At four or five years old, besides reading, boys and girls might be taught to knit, spin, &c. and bigger boys, turning, &c. ; and beginning young they would make the best artists ; and by being upon business, tho' slight, it improves their reasons by sensible demonstration (which is sooner learned than any rational demonstration without it. . . .) Thus the hand employed brings profit, the reason used in it makes wise, and the will subdued makes them good."

Bellers does not enter into much detail as to the arrangement of the buildings in his proposed college. But he mentions that there must be four separate sleeping-wards—for the young men and boys, the young women and girls, the married folk, and the sick and lame. There is also to be a common dining-hall, where the boys and girls are to wait upon the men and women at meals. The tract concludes by citing a series of objections to the scheme and triumphantly refuting them.

It seems probable that this last feature in Bellers's tract suggested the similar recital of objections and their answers which forms the prominent feature of Owen's letter of the 25th July—his first production, apparently, after reading the earlier tract. And the enlargement in Owen's views between March and July may plausibly be traced to the same source. For Bellers's plan was not intended for a particular time of distress, or for the benefit of particular persons out of employment. He boldly advocates industrial communism as the royal

solution of all the troubles and difficulties of the working classes, whilst he quaintly justifies the proposal to assign the surplus profits to the capitalists on the ground that "the rich have no other way of living, but by the labour of others; as the landlord by the labour of his tenants, and the merchants and tradesmen by the labour of the mechanics, except they turn levellers, and set the rich to work with the poor."

The resemblance in its broad lines between Bellers's "Colledge of Industry" and Owen's village of co-operation is unmistakable, and as will be seen in the next chapter, Owen shortly proceeded still further to develop his Plan upon the lines laid down by Bellers.

Probably no reforms so drastic were ever put before the nation under such respectable patronage. Owen, as he tells us, received friendly encouragement from the Ministry, and was permitted to place on his committee the names of nearly all the great personages in Church and State.¹ The leading newspapers gladly opened their columns to him, praised his benevolence and his patriotism, and expressed the desire that his scheme should be fairly tried.

But the praise of the *Times* and other London journals was not perhaps altogether disinterested, for Owen tells us that he used to purchase thirty thousand copies of newspapers containing his letters and addresses and post

¹ According to the report in the *Times* of August 15, the committee proposed by Owen included the archbishops of England and Ireland, the ministers, the judges, the bishops, the Dukes of Rutland, Wellington, Bedford, and numerous other peers; Sir F. Burdett, Wilberforce, W. Smith, Thomas Babington, Coke of Norfolk (afterwards Earl of Leicester), Huskisson, Walter Scott, Dugald Stewart, Robert Southey, and many other well-known names.

them to the clergy of every parish in the kingdom, and that on one occasion the bulk of the additional newspapers was so great that the mail-coaches were delayed twenty minutes in starting from St. Martin's-le-Grand. These newspapers, Owen tells us, were franked by Lord Lascelles, who had helped in the preliminary negotiations for introducing the Factory Bill of 1819 into the House of Commons, and subsequently spoke against that measure.

As the *Times* and the *Morning Post* at that time, including the stamp duty, cost sevenpence a copy, Owen found little difficulty in the course of these two months, August and September, 1817, in spending the sum of four thousand pounds in securing publicity for his views.¹

The insinuation made by Jonathan Wooler, the editor of the *Black Dwarf*, that this lavish expenditure was defrayed out of public funds, was probably quite unfounded. Wooler professed to believe that the ministers stood behind Owen, hoping that the publication of the plan might at least do something to allay public discontent—might serve, to employ his own simile, as a tub thrown to the whale. But if Wooler in making this charge allowed his better judgment to be overborne by his desire to discredit the hated Government, his criticism of Owen's proceedings is in other respects acute and by no means unfair. We have already seen that he classes Owen as a disciple of Thomas Spence, the bugbear of the Ministry. He goes on to pay a warm tribute of respect to Owen's sincerity and his "enthusiastic benevolence." But he points out that the plan aims, in plain terms, at establishing "a nursery for men," a kind of pauper barracks, where men, women and children

would be reduced to mere automata ; their feelings, passions and opinions measured out by rule ; working in common, living in common, and having all things common except their wives ; with abundance of food and clothing ; but without liberty or hope of anything beyond.

Again, the *Black Dwarf* not unfairly points out that Owen was quite unable to meet his opponents in argument. If any one criticised the scheme adversely, Owen's only reply was to accuse the critic of ignorance and inexperience. " With Mr. Owen it would be useless to argue. He is only calculated to represent his system. A defence of it is beyond his powers. He therefore wisely shuns the replication, and persists in asserting that his plan is the wisest, best and most admirable scheme that ever entered into any human comprehension. It is—because it is. ' See what a pretty plan I have drawn out *on paper*. At what equal distances I have placed such and such buildings. How imposing they are. There are all the offices, attached and detached, that could be wished. There are schools and lecture rooms, and Committee rooms and brew-houses and workhouses and granaries. There you will put the women, there the men and there the children. They will be called to dinner every day regularly, and they will be clothed and taught and not worked very much. Oh, how happy they must be ! There is nothing to prevent it whatever. All the bad passions will be eradicated, and I should like to live there myself. Nobody that *understands* it can for a moment object to it. Why, there is to be a chapel in which only the *truth* is to be taught ; and schools where nothing but *useful* knowledge is to be

inculcated.' Such is the reasoning Mr. Owen condescends to use : and if he had to make the beings who are to inhabit his paradises, as well as to make the laws that should regulate them, there can be no doubt that he would manage everything extremely well."

That is how the plan impressed a contemporary, himself an ardent worker on the side of the people, and ready when the occasion came to suffer imprisonment in their cause. If we compare this utterance with the writer's venomous attacks on Sidmouth and the Government generally, we shall see that the criticism, though searching, is by no means unkindly. The *Black Dwarf's* final advice to Owen is to "*let the Poor alone. The working bee can always find a hive*"; and if the philanthropist yearns to fill his barracks, let him take the pampered sinecurists, the hungry placemen, the public pensioners and a few well-fed bishops. These gentlemen would scarcely do enough work to pay for their keep ; but if they lived upon twenty pounds a head, they would at least free themselves from the gout, and the country from the cost of their maintenance.¹

The other Reformers took much the same line. Thus Hone writes : "It is the Spencean plan doubly dipped" ; and again, "Mr. Owen conceives that all human beings are so many plants which require to be reset. He accordingly proceeds to dibble them in squares, etc."² Cobbett finds the plan "nothing short of a species of monkery," and asks whether "the novices when once *confirmed* are to regard their character of Pauper as indelible ?" and whether "the Sisterhood

¹ *Black Dwarf*, August 20, 1817.

² Hone's *Reformists' Register*, August 23 and 30, 1817.

and Brotherhood are to form distinct bodies, or to live together promiscuously?"¹

The general trend of criticism on Owen's speech at the meeting of August 14, was to the same effect. The chief speaker was Major Torrens, who dwelt upon the difficulties which must ensue with a population relieved from the direct pressure of subsistence, but left free to multiply. Then followed several prominent members of the Reform party—Hunt, Wooler and Alderman Waithman, the latter moving an amendment to Owen's resolutions, calling upon the Legislature to reduce public expenditure and adopt other measures to relieve the present distress. No one spoke in favour of Owen's plan. Waithman's amendment was put to the meeting, but declared to be lost on a show of hands. The chairman's impartiality was, however, loudly questioned, and a vote of thanks to him proposed by Owen was lost. The *Times* report ends with the significant remark that Watson, Preston, and Thistlewood were present.²

¹ Cobbett's *Weekly Political Pamphlet*, August 2, 1817. Cobbett was at this time in America, having fled from the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act and the general reign of terror. The letter from which the above extracts are taken is dated "North Hampstead, Long Island, June 13th, 1817," and the criticism, therefore is obviously directed to Owen's first Report.

² *Times*, August 15, 1817. Watson, Preston, and Thistlewood had been amongst the ringleaders of the Spa Fields' Riot, mentioned on p. 214. Thistlewood was hanged in 1820 for his connection with the Cato Street Conspiracy.

CHAPTER XI

1817—1819

SUCH, then, was Owen's position in the middle of August, 1817. He found indeed little favour with the party of reform. They viewed his plans with half contemptuous tolerance, when they did not actively oppose them. They disapproved of the scheme on economic grounds ; they disapproved still more of the undemocratic character of the government proposed for the colonies. Owen's personal experience had led him to regard a benevolent paternal despotism as the ideal constitution, and this element, as we have seen, was strongly repugnant to men of the type of Cobbett, Hone and Wooler. Moreover, Owen's friendly relations with the ministers were little likely to prepossess the Radicals in his favour. And in any case they felt that, even if a scheme of the kind proposed were feasible, it could but act as a temporary palliative, and must in the long run be harmful to the cause of progress, by diverting attention from the real remedies for the distress.

On the other hand Owen could count on sympathy and encouragement from many persons high in Church and State : he numbered several of the bishops amongst his friends ; the most influential of the London journals

had given flattering notices and had protested sympathy with his plans. Lord Liverpool had invited him to an interview and expressed his interest and approval. From the fact that Owen was allowed to nominate the members of the Ministry on his committee, it would almost seem that the Government were not without hopes that good might come of the scheme. The distress was real enough and serious enough; and, like a patient suffering from an incurable disease, ministers may have thought their straits sufficiently desperate to justify resort even to quack remedies.

But again, whatever we may think of its later development, in its original form Owen's plan could scarcely be classed as a quack remedy. Farm colonies had already been tried with good results, as we have seen, in the Isle of Wight and in Kent. Similar colonies were started, with some measure of success, in Holland and Belgium a year or two later. And the hope of bringing together vacant land and unemployed labour has continued to inspire successive generations of social reformers down to the present day. Owen's plan, regarded merely as a scheme for the employment of the poor, was so far from being absurd or purely Utopian, that no less an authority than Ricardo was in favour of the experiment having a fair trial. At a public meeting to promote Owen's scheme held in June, 1819, Ricardo allowed his name to be placed on the committee, explaining that he did so because, though he did not go all the way with Owen, nor expect of the scheme all the good which Owen expected of it, yet in a limited degree he thought it likely to "succeed, and to produce, when it did succeed, considerable happiness, comfort and

morality, by giving employment and instruction to the lower classes.”¹

Later in the same year, on Sir W. de Crespigny's motion for a Select Committee to enquire into Owen's plan, Ricardo voted with the small minority in favour of the motion.²

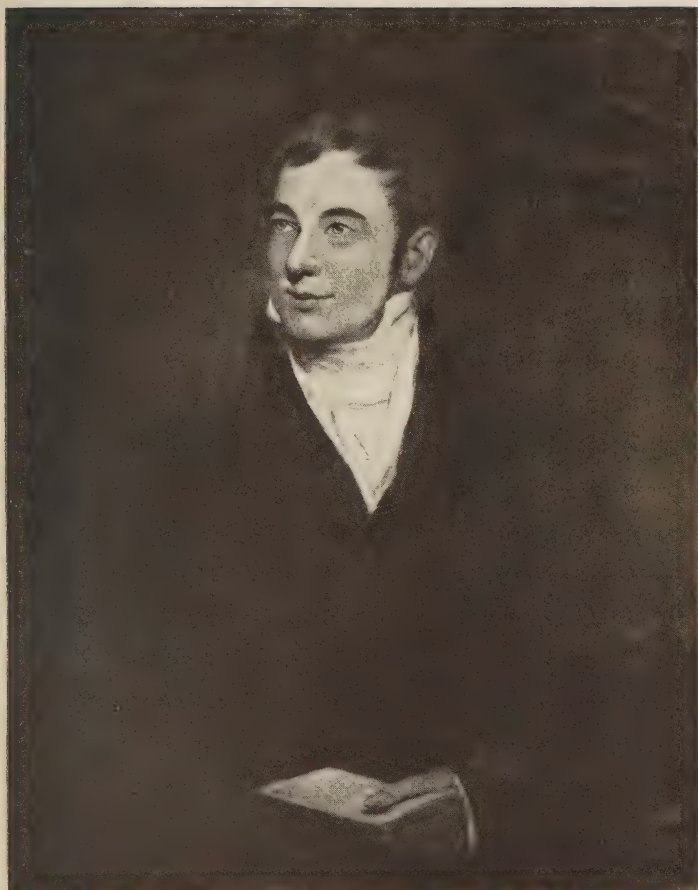
Briefly, then, up to the date of his second meeting on August 21, 1817, Owen had on his side the bulk of the respectable classes, and the more influential portion of the London press. He had, too, the cordial sympathy and respect of many amongst the political economists and reformers who were definitely opposed to his plan. His conspicuous goodwill to all mankind and his splendid record in the past spoke for him; and he probably does not greatly exaggerate the case when he says of himself, that at this time he was “beyond comparison the most generally popular character living.”³

But Owen had other enemies besides the Reformers and the economists. Southey, as we have seen, had already discovered that the system was not founded on religious principles. Indeed, though Owen had refrained from defining his attitude precisely in the *Essays on the Formation of Character*, he had made it sufficiently clear that his own religious beliefs were far removed from orthodoxy. To a mind like Owen's the mere suppression, even from no ignoble motive, of unpopular opinions must have seemed like treason to the truth. He was troubled by no doubts as to the perfect reason-

¹ Report of meeting in *Times* of June 28, 1819.

² *Hansard*, debate of December 16, 1819. On this occasion, however, Ricardo explained that he was at war with Owen's system, but wanted to know more about spade husbandry.

³ *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 189.



*From the portrait by Pickersgill, in the possession of Mr. William Tebb.
Painted in 1826.*

ROBERT OWEN.

ableness of his own views on these matters ; he probably saw no reason why any portion of the message with which he was charged should be any longer withheld. The attacks of the clerical party thus combined with his own instinctive aversion to reticence of any kind to impel him to speak out. *Truth, as he said, will prevail.*

He came, then, to the meeting of August 21 full of the high resolve boldly to confront his accusers, and to leave unspoken no jot or tittle of his message to mankind.¹ The first part of the address travelled over familiar ground, and was concerned mainly with demonstrating the immeasurable advantages possessed by his system over the present state of society, or of any scheme yet devised for its amendment. In a passage informed with sincere feeling he sought to show that when each man was a member of a huge family, and all worked together for the common good, even death would be robbed of more than half its terrors. The mourners would find "consolation in the certain knowledge that within their own immediate circle they have many, many others remaining ; and around them on all sides, as far as the eye can reach, or imagination extend, thousands on thousands, in strict, intimate, and close union, are ready and willing to offer them aid and consolation. No orphan left without protectors ; no insult or oppression can take place, nor any evil result whatever, beyond the loss of one dear friend or object from among thousands who remain, dear to us as ourselves. Here may it be truly said, 'O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ?'"²

¹ The address, it should be remembered, was written out beforehand.

² *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, p. 114.

He then suddenly changed his tone. "It may now be asked, 'If the new arrangements proposed really possess all the advantages that have been stated, why have they not been adopted in universal practice during all the ages which have passed?'

"'Why should so many countless millions of our fellow-creatures, through each successive generation, have been the victims of ignorance, of superstition, of mental degradation, and of wretchedness?'

"My friends, a more important question has never yet been put to the sons of men! Who *can* answer it? who *dare* answer it,—but with his life in his hand; a ready and willing victim to truth, and to the emancipation of the world from its long bondage of disunion, error, crime and misery?

"Behold that victim! On this day—in this hour—even now—shall those bonds be burst asunder, never more to reunite while the world shall last. What the consequences of this daring deed shall be to myself, I am as indifferent about as whether it shall rain or be fair to-morrow. Whatever may be the consequences, I will now perform my duty to you, and to the world; and should it be the last act of my life, I shall be well content, and know that I have lived for an important purpose.

"Then, my friends, I tell you, that hitherto you have been prevented from even knowing what happiness really is, solely in consequence of the errors—gross errors—that have been combined with the fundamental notions of every religion that has hitherto been taught to men. And, in consequence, they have made man the most inconsistent, and the most miserable being in

existence. By the errors of these systems he has been made a weak, imbecile animal; a furious bigot and fanatic; or a miserable hypocrite; and should these qualities be carried, not only into the projected villages, but *into Paradise itself, a Paradise would be no longer found!* . . .

“Therefore, unless the world is now prepared to dismiss all its erroneous religious notions, and to feel the justice and necessity of publicly acknowledging the most unlimited religious freedom, it will be futile to erect villages of union and mutual co-operation; for it will be vain to look on this earth for inhabitants to occupy them, *who can understand how to live in the bond of peace and unity*; or who can love their neighbour as themselves, whether he be Jew or Gentile, Mahomedan or Pagan, Infidel or Christian. Any religion that creates one particle of feeling short of this, is *false*; and must prove a curse to the whole human race!”¹

Such was the famous denunciation of all the religions of the world, to which Owen himself was accustomed to refer as the turning-point in his life.

In the debate which followed the address the religious question was scarcely referred to, the chief speakers being again Major Torrens, Wooler, Waithman and the veteran reformer Major Cartwright. In the event Owen's resolutions were lost, and Alderman Waithman's amendment—ascribing the distress to heavy taxation and bad Government and calling upon the Ministry for retrenchment and reform—which had been declared to be lost at the previous meeting, was again put to the vote and carried by a large majority.

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, pp. 115, 116.

But the effect of Owen's frankness was seen in the attitude of the press. The *Times*, which up to this point had continued to speak with enthusiasm of Owen's philanthropy, and had more than once expressed a desire to see his scheme fairly tried, opened its leader of August 22 with the significant words—"The curtain dropt yesterday upon Mr. Owen's drama, not soon, it is probable to be again lifted up. . . . Mr. Owen promised a Paradise to mankind, but, as far as we can understand, not such a Paradise as a sane mind would enjoy, or a disciple of Christianity could meditate without terror."

Owen tells us that on the day after the speech he met Brougham, who exclaimed, "How the devil, Owen, could you say what you did yesterday at your public meeting! If any of us" (meaning the Liberal party in the House of Commons) "had said half as much, we should have been burned alive—and here you are quietly walking as if nothing had occurred!"¹

Again, two years later, in the debate in the House of Commons on December 16, 1819, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in opposing Sir W. de Crespigny's motion for a Select Committee to enquire into Owen's scheme, found his weightiest argument in the passage above quoted from the address of August 21.

There can be no doubt, then, that Owen's outspoken denunciation of current religious systems did much to alienate those of his friends who occupied high places in the world. But it is probable that his own extravagance and want of judgment did still more to discredit his cause with many who would have remained unaffected

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol. I., p. 164.

by the proof of his unorthodoxy. Owen had from the first shown himself incapable of answering or even apparently of understanding the objections urged against his scheme, especially the two cardinal objections—the enormous expenditure involved, and the danger of population, deprived of the natural checks, increasing beyond the limits of subsistence. In his letter of August 19, he dismisses the arguments brought forward by Major Torrens and others at the meeting a few days previously as “little to the purpose, futile and contrary to daily experience, and evincing much real ignorance of the subject,” and compares his excited critics at the conclusion of the meeting to “so many individuals in a very ill-managed lunatic asylum.” A final letter, published in the newspapers of September 10, 1817, begins, “The adjourned public meeting, to consider the plan I have proposed, has passed ; and from its commencement to the end, it far more than satisfied all my wishes. Each prominent figure moved correctly to the wire that was touched for the purpose. The opposition to the measures recommended to these meetings for their concurrence has well accomplished the part assigned to it, and has thereby forwarded all my views, and brought the adoption of the plan in its whole extent some years nearer than otherwise could have been possible. My chief apprehension previous to the meeting was that there would not be a sufficiently decisive stand made by its opponents, to elicit all the arguments which could be urged against it ; for I was anxious the public should discover all their fatuity and weakness.”

And again, “The gentlemen who opposed the plan at

the public meetings, (for whom, however, I do not entertain one unsocial feeling,) did not surely imagine I wished to have the opinions of the ill-trained and uninformed on any of the measures intended for their relief and amelioration. No! On such subjects, until they shall be instructed in better habits, and made rationally intelligent, their advice can be of no value.”¹

Language of this character was clearly more calculated to alienate friends than to conciliate opponents. Nor was the unhappy impression produced by this arrogance mitigated by the nature of the proposals as still further developed in the letter of September 10. Owen now makes it clearer than before that he aimed at nothing less than an early and complete revolution of the social state. The persons for whom these villages of co-operation are designed are no longer simply the unemployed, for beyond these he enumerates three other categories, viz. ; II. The able-bodied working class without property. III. The working class with property ranging from £100 apiece. IV. The rich, who are to live by employing the members of Class II. to work for them. This further development of the scheme is obviously borrowed from Bellers; and like Bellers, Owen enters into considerable detail as to the voting powers, the appointment of committees, and the general machinery of government for these self-sufficing communities. The letter concludes with an extraordinary schedule, showing how in the present state of society, divided as it is by religious and political differences, union and stability can be ensured by founding a sufficient number of communities to embrace at once every possible

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, pp. 119, 120.

combination of religious belief and political conviction. Thus Community No. I. may consist exclusively of persons who are at once Arminian Methodists and violent Ministerialists, whilst No. 50 may consist of Jews who are moderate Reformers, and so on with all other possible combinations.¹ Finally, in an address dated September 19, he announced that the New State of Society Enrolment Office would shortly be opened at Temple Chambers, Fleet Street, and that meanwhile Books of Enrolment were to be found at Longman's and other leading publishers.²

After the publication of his final address of September 19, Owen seems to have rested for a time from his public labours. Probably his business and domestic affairs claimed his attention. In the following year, however, he published *A New View of Society: tracts relative to this subject*, which contains a reprint of Bellers's

¹ This schedule was a most unfortunate production. An enemy who wished to caricature Owen's views could hardly have succeeded better. An enthusiastic admirer writing in warm praise of the three addresses, adds, "always excepted the abominable table of Sects . . . (it has) disgusted (*unnecessarily*) every one, and conciliated none." (Letter of April 30, 1818, Manchester Correspondence.)

² The address of September 19 (reprinted in *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, pp. 138-41) was not published in the *Times*. It appears, however, in No. III. of a series of contemporary broadsheets (undated). No. III. contains the Second Address (of August 21), the letter of September 10, and this short address, and bears on the outer cover an intimation that it was to be purchased from Dr. Wilkes, New State of Society Enrolment Office, Temple Chambers. I cannot ascertain whether this office was ever opened, or whether the *Mirror of Truth*, a fortnightly paper announced in the address of September 19, ever made its appearance.

It should be added that a postscript to the letter of September 10, explaining that Owen was not an enemy to true religion, but merely to all sectarian manifestations of the religious spirit, which appears in the *Autobiography*, (Vol. IA, p. 137), is not to be found in the original letter as published in the *Times*, nor in the contemporary broadsheet.

tract, the sketch of the Shaker communities already referred to, together with the Report of March, 1817, and the public addresses and letters to the newspapers of the same year. He also wrote in March, 1818, the two letters to Lord Liverpool and the Master Manufacturers respectively, on the Employment of Children in Factories; and in May of the same year he indited from New Lanark a long letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury on the Union of Churches and Schools.

A great part of the summer and autumn of this year, 1818, was spent in a Continental tour, under the guidance for some months of Professor Pictet, himself a well-known savant, and member of a Genevan family distinguished for two or three generations in scientific investigation. Pictet introduced Owen to Cuvier, who was at the time in London, and they went to Paris together. Owen carried letters of introduction from the Duke of Kent to the Duke of Orleans (afterwards King Louis-Philippe), with whom he held a long and confidential conversation, and to other personages. In the company of Cuvier and Pictet he had frequent meetings with La Place, Humboldt and other men of science, paid a visit to the Academy, and conversed with many of the most distinguished men and women in Paris.

After six weeks Owen was joined by his sisters-in-law, and, accompanied by Pictet, the whole party set out for Geneva. They drove across the Jura, and Owen records one amusing little incident on the journey. The weather being fine, the whole party got out to walk, the young women in front, Owen and Pictet conversing at some distance behind. The two latter in passing a group of well-dressed young women at the door of a house, heard

them making merry over the outlandish garb—riding habits and hats of the late Georgian era—worn by the English ladies. On rejoining his sisters-in-law Owen tell us that he was much amused to receive in turn their comments on the ridiculous costume worn by the natives whom they had just passed.

At Geneva Owen met Madame Neckar, Mademoiselle de Stael, Sismondi, and others. From thence he went on to pay the visits already mentioned¹ to the schools of Oberlin, Pestalozzi, and Fellenberg.

At Frankfort Owen wrote two Memorials—one dated September 20, 1818, to the Governments of Europe and America, the other dated October 22, to the Allied Powers assembled in Congress at Aix-la-Chapelle. He met there many prominent statesmen and politicians and expounded his system to the members of the Germanic Diet at a banquet given, as he tells us, in his honour. Here too he introduced himself to the Czar (Alexander I., elder brother of Owen's guest, the Grand Duke Nicholas) as the latter was leaving his hotel, and offered him a copy of the two Memorials. The Czar had no pocket big enough to hold the papers and refused to accept them at the moment, asking Owen to call on him that evening. The brusqueness of his tone offended Owen, and he refrained from accepting the invitation. Owen entrusted copies of his Memorial, however, to Lord Castlereagh, one of the British representatives at Aix-la-Chapelle, to present to the Congress, and he learnt afterwards from various sources that they were considered to be amongst the most important documents laid before that assembly.²

¹ Above pages 126-8.

² *Autobiography*, Vol. I., pp. 186, 188.

These Memorials recapitulated briefly the main points of the argument developed at length in the *Essays on the Formation of Character*, and the *Addresses* of 1817, in a series of three propositions:—

(1) That the introduction of machinery had rendered possible the production of riches enough and much more than enough for all human wants.

(2) That mankind now possessed the requisite means and knowledge to enable them to mould to their will the characters of the next generation.

(3) That it is to the interest of Governments and individuals to put that knowledge into practice without delay.

The Memorials were carefully and temperately worded. There is no mention of quadrangular villages, or the pernicious influence of religion; and the egotism which marked the addresses of 1817 is almost entirely absent. But nothing can repress Owen's optimism.

"Any attempt," he writes, "to stop or retard the introduction of these measures will be unavailing. Already the principles and consequent practice are placed effectually beyond the power of human assault. It will be found that silence cannot now retard their progress, and that opposition will give increased celerity to their movements."¹

In 1819 Owen renewed his propaganda. In the early part of that year he wrote an Address to the Working Classes which was published at length in two London papers—the *Star*² and the *Examiner*.³ In making an appeal to one particular section of the com-

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, p. 212.

² April 15, 1819.

³ April 25, 1819.

munity, Owen is careful to explain that he does not seek to set class against class. He takes occasion to assure the working classes, from personal knowledge, that the rich are not animated by any ill-will against them, but like them are bound in the chains of traditional habits and sentiments. His message to the workers is that, properly understood, the interest of rich and poor is the same; that the prevalent ideas and existing social arrangements are destructive of the well-being of all alike; and that the true knowledge of human nature and its potentialities, now at length revealed, furnishes the means of a complete social revolution, to be effected without violence, with the help and goodwill of all alike. The address ends with a characteristic sentence.

“That the past ages of the world present the history of human irrationality only, and that we are but now advancing toward the dawn of reason, and to the period when the mind of man shall be born again.”

The address seems to have excited little attention, though the *Examiner* had a friendly leader on the subject. But an effort was made by Owen's friends in the latter part of this year to bring his plans once more before the public. The most influential of these friends was the Duke of Kent, son of George III. and father of Queen Victoria. The Duke appears to have been genuinely impressed by Owen's character, and convinced of his power for good. The Duke, with his brother, the Duke of Sussex, was in the habit at this time, as Owen tells us, of coming to his house and discussing his social experiments with him. The two brothers would inspect the model of the new villages, and marvel

at the set of eight cubes which Owen had caused to be made, illustrating the proportions of the different classes into which existing society was divided—the working classes being represented at the base by a cube of $3\frac{5}{8}$ inches a side, whilst the apex was formed by a cube, representing the Royal Family, the Lords spiritual and temporal, whose side measured only three-sixteenths of an inch.¹

Further, it appeared that Owen had interested himself in the endeavour to straighten out the Duke's finances. The letters written by the Duke to Owen in this year show the terms upon which the two men stood to each other. Thus on September 13, 1819, the Duke wrote, in answer to a letter from Owen, "With regard to my own finances, I admit the justice of all you say," and then proceeded to recount his efforts to live within his income, and to explain the extreme difficulty, in his position, of effecting any substantial retrenchment in the expenses of his establishment.²

A few weeks later Owen invited the Duke and Duchess to accept his hospitality at New Lanark. The invitation came a few months after the birth of the infant

¹ The series of cubes (nine in all, since they included a cube representing the whole population, $3\frac{5}{8}$ inches a side) was based upon Table No. 4, "An attempt to Exhibit a General view of Society," given in Colquhoun's *Resources of the British Empire*, first published in 1814. Owen gives at least two descriptions of the series of cubes, (1) in the *Millennial Gazette* for August 1, 1857, p. 77, where the numerical proportions are given, and (2) in *Robert Owen's Journal*, Vol. III., p. 191, where the sizes of the cubes are stated. The two tables do not quite agree with each other, and neither appears exactly to correspond with the figures given in Colquhoun's published work; but the essential point is that society is represented in a pyramidal form, the wealth and dignities and privileges of the few rich broadbased upon the millions of the industrious classes.

² The letter is given in full in the *Rational Quarterly Review*, p. 28.

Victoria,¹ and the Duke, in a letter dated October 8, excuses himself at the moment from accepting the invitation on account of the Duchess's health, adding, "but if, upon the Meeting of Parliament things take that turn which it is to be hoped they will do—viz: that your judicious plans to remedy the evil of the want of productive employment are taken up by the Government, or the majority of independent members, in such a manner as to ensure them a fair discussion, there will be no difficulty whatever, even if the Duchess should be unable to accompany me on account of the season of the year, for me to run over by myself and make myself so far master of the whole system, as to be able to deliver my sentiments upon it.

"With respect to myself, be assured that I consider the trouble and fatigue of the journey as *nothing: nor would the Duchess*, but for the critical moment for her health, immediately after nursing, which requires so much attention.

"With regard to the *plain and simple* accommodation you will have to offer us, I speak equally her feelings and my own, when I say it is *what we should prefer* to any other, accompanied by the sincerity of that welcome which we know Mrs. Owen and yourself would give us.

"For *my own* part I am already *convinced* that what I should see on the spot would *amply repay me* for any little trouble and expense the journey might occasion me; and the Duchess is as much prepossessed in favour of the thing as I am."²

Sir W. de Crespigny's motion was lost in the House

¹ May 24, 1819.

² *Rational Quarterly Review*, p. 32.

of Commons, and no debate seems to have been initiated in the Lords, so that the opportunity never came for the Duke to fulfil his promise, and his sudden death in the following year, 1820, put an end to the project.

Much of the correspondence with the Duke is occupied with the visits to New Lanark of General Desseaux, Sir W. de Crespigny and others, of the projected visit of "my illustrious relative, Prince Leopold," and of the advent of Dr. Grey Macnab, the Duke's own physician, whom he had despatched to New Lanark to examine and report upon the establishment. Macnab's enthusiastic account, already referred to, and the Duke's patronage no doubt did much to rehabilitate Owen's reputation amongst many who had been alienated by his proceedings in 1817.

But the Duke did more to help on the cause. On June 26 of this year 1819, a meeting was held under his presidency in the Freemasons' Hall, to appoint a committee to report upon Owen's plan. In his opening remarks the Duke dwelt upon the fact that, whatever Owen's private opinions might be, he allowed the fullest religious liberty to all at New Lanark. But he seems to have spoken in vain. The names of the Archbishop and several bishops were proposed for the committee, but in the final list of the committee published a few days later, the Lords Spiritual are not represented. For the rest, the committee included the Dukes of Kent and Sussex, Sir W. de Crespigny, Sir Robert Peel, John Smith and several other Members of Parliament, Major Torrens, and David Ricardo.

On August 11, the committee issued an appeal to the public for subscriptions, in order that an experimental

establishment might be started. The amount needed for the experiment was £100,000. On August 23 they published an address, explaining and justifying their confidence in Owen's plan. The address begins by insisting upon Owen's long experience in the management of men and of business concerns, and describing in outline the results achieved at New Lanark under his direction. The only new point made here is that a certain portion of land at New Lanark was kept under garden cultivation by the mill operatives,¹ and that the proposed villages of co-operation would differ from New Lanark mainly in the proportions assigned to agriculture and manufactures respectively. The address then proceeded to state and answer certain objections which had been raised to the scheme. The first and greatest difficulty is presented by Owen's unfortunately notorious opinions in religious matters. On this the committee remark that Owen had never been known to interfere with the religious opinions of those in his employment; that he and his partners had for many years paid for the services of a Gaelic-speaking minister, to provide for the religious needs of the Highland workmen: "that Mr. Owen's own house is a house of daily prayer; that he is the father of a large and well-regulated moral family; that his conduct appears to be free from reproach, and that his character is distinguished by active benevolence, perfect sincerity, and undisturbed tranquillity of temper."

To the objection that Owen's plan involved a community of goods, the reply is made that, whatever Owen

¹ The amount of land under cultivation at New Lanark was small. From the report of the Leeds Deputation we learn that it amounted to two hundred and forty acres, for a population of two thousand five hundred persons.

may have said or written about communism, he does not regard it as an essential feature of his plan, nor would he withhold his co-operation and superintendence from the experiment if communism were vetoed.¹ Further, there need be no anxiety on this score, since community of profits from land is not possible under the existing laws. The objection that the plan contemplates equalisation of ranks, and the still more serious objection to the proposed scheme on Malthusian principles, alike fall to the ground if there is to be no community of goods, but each man is to receive the reward of his own labour, and the due profit of his invested capital—neither less nor more.

The proposal to have meals in common may seem to savour of communism ; but it is really, the committee explain, a matter simply of convenience and economy ; a common table need not be insisted upon ; “ the workmen might receive their wages in money, and the mode

¹ Owen's original plan was purely communistic. The principle on which it was founded was that of “ combined labour and expenditure ” ; the colonists were to labour in a “ community of interests ” ; there would be no disputes about the division of property, because all could procure “ the necessaries and comforts of life in abundance,” and would no more wish to accumulate an excess of such goods, than they wish in the present state of society to take more than their share of water or air. Even the superintendents and governors were to work without salary (Report reprinted in *Autobiography*, Vol. I A, pp. 71, 72, etc.). Later, in his letter of September 6, in classifying the members of the proposed communities according to the property which they brought in with them, Owen departed from the simplicity of his original plan. Men who contributed capital were to have superior accommodation, in proportion to the amount of their capital ; and the workmen of the 2nd Class, by whose labour the rich were to be supported, were to receive at the end of five years £100, to invest in the community, or to enable them to start in the outside world if they wish to leave the communal life. But even here Owen does not apparently contemplate the actual payment of wages or that there would be any need for money within the community.

in which they dispose of them would be entirely at their own option.”

In brief, the committee contemplated a joint-stock enterprise on a large scale, which should pay interest and profit on capital and wages to labour ; an enterprise differing from ordinary commercial enterprises mainly in its novel combination of agricultural and manufacturing pursuits, and in the character of its labourers. The ordinary business house takes its labourers in the prime of life and takes the best it can get. This novel commercial enterprise, which repudiated the title of charitable, was to find its recruits amongst the ranks of the unemployed poor—the men and women who had so far failed in the battle of life. Owen’s original scheme was no doubt Utopian in so far as it took too little account of the existing facts of human nature. Moreover, it was based on fundamentally false premises. Its author’s imagination had been entirely dominated by the enormous multiplication of productive power in the region of manufactures brought about by the mechanical inventions of the past generation. And he seems tacitly to have assumed that new inventions would be forthcoming which would in like manner multiply the productiveness of human labour when applied to the soil. The spinning-jenny and the mule enabled the men of Owen’s generation to spin fifty- or a hundred-fold the amount of yarn which their fathers could produce with their utmost toil ; the further progress of invention would no doubt enable their sons to extract from the earth tenfold or a hundredfold the present harvests. Implicitly this fallacious analogy dominated all Owen’s reasonings, and formed the economic justification for his

Utopian schemes. But if his premises are granted, Owen's scheme can hardly be described as simply Utopian. For it insisted, as the first condition of the New Society, on the proper training of all its members; and it made its appeal to the nobler instincts of human nature. Owen said in effect, "You can, if you will, train man to be a social animal, and to obey only social instincts; and with men so trained a community such as I propose cannot fail of success."

The committee of 1819 did nothing to correct the fundamental fallacy of Owen's economic reasoning: they thrust almost out of sight the condition which he had insisted upon as an essential preliminary—the training of the children; and they made their appeal, not to the larger and finer nature which Owen hoped to evoke in his future colonists, but to the men and women of the market-place.

Such a scheme was open to many of the economic objections which could be urged against Owen's plan, and it lacked altogether Owen's wider outlook, and the almost prophetic fervour which had inspired his advocacy. The committee's appeal could inspire no man. Philanthropy plus 5 per cent. responded by offering less than eight thousand towards the hundred thousand pounds which was needed; and the committee met for the last time on December 1, 1819, to declare their failure, and to pass a vote of thanks to the Duke of Kent for his "condescending kindness" in presiding at their meetings.

Three other events of this year fall to be noted. In August a deputation of three gentlemen, Mr. Edward Baines, Mr. Robert Oastler and Mr. John Cawood,

visited New Lanark for the purpose of reporting to the Guardians of the Poor at Leeds on the nature of the establishment, with the view of adopting Owen's plan for the employment of the poor. Their report, extracts from which have been given in a previous chapter, was entirely favourable. On December 16 Sir W. de Crespigny moved in the House of Commons for the appointment of a Select Committee to enquire into Owen's proposals for the amelioration of the condition of the lower classes. The motion was seconded by Lord Archibald Hamilton, and supported by Brougham, John Smith, Ricardo, and Alderman Wood. It was opposed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Wilberforce. All the speakers paid tribute of respect to Owen's high character and to the excellence of his work at New Lanark. The opposition was based less on economic than on religious grounds. The Chancellor read to the House the extract quoted in the earlier part of the present chapter from the address of August 21, 1817, in which Owen had denounced all religions. And Wilberforce contended that all that was good in the state of New Lanark was due less to Owen's wise government than to "the good old system of Christianity." In the event the motion was lost by a hundred and forty-one to sixteen.

In the spring of the year Sir J. Buchanan Riddle, the member for the united boroughs of Lanark, Selkirk, Peebles and Linlithgow, died, and Owen declared himself a candidate for the vacant seat. In his address, dated April 24, 1819, and issued from 49, Bedford Square, London, he bases his claim to represent the boroughs on his extensive experience and his knowledge of the

true remedies for the existing distress.¹ He was not elected, owing, as he tells us, to his many public engagements in London preventing the necessary prosecution of his candidature. At the general election which took place on the death of the King early in the following year he appears to have stood again, but with like want of success. His failure on this second occasion is attributed in his *Autobiography* to the fact that some of the old Lanark voters were won over by the bribes of his opponents. He was, however, assured beforehand of the support of the Magistrates and Town Council of Linlithgow; and on March 3, 1820, *i.e.* ten days before the dissolution of Parliament, he was entertained at a public dinner by the inhabitants of Lanark.²

¹ See the address published in *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, p. 332.

² *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, pp. 334, 335. Owen's own account of his candidature (*Autobiography*, Vol. IA, p. 226 *seq.*) is rather confused. But it seems clear, from the contemporary documents, that his *first* candidature occurred on the death of Sir J. B. Riddle, in April, 1819, and his second candidature probably took place at the General Election of the following year.

CHAPTER XII

REPORT TO THE COUNTY OF LANARK

HITHERTO Owen had dwelt mainly on the ethical aspect of the problem which he had set himself to solve. Through the lately won knowledge of the formation of character, human nature, he had proclaimed, could be fashioned anew: the vicious could be made well-disposed, the turbulent could be made peaceful, the idle industrious. The economic aspects of the problem had been almost completely left out of count. He had himself grown rich, and had seen other men grow rich, almost without effort or volition of their own; his own workpeople at New Lanark could at the present time produce more cotton than the whole county—perhaps the whole kingdom—could have produced when he was a child. He saw no reason to doubt that the mechanical inventions which had thus multiplied the productivity of human labour in the processes of manufacture could as readily multiply the produce of the same labour when applied to the soil. At New Lanark, as we have seen, a widow with many young children was a desirable prize in the marriage market. Owen was fully persuaded that there was enough and to spare for all, and that, as in the small corner of the world's market with which he was familiar, new mouths would

all the world over continue to bring with them hands more than sufficient to provide for their wants.

Strong in this belief he felt that he could afford to laugh at Malthus, and to neglect nice calculations of supply and demand. So little indeed had he considered his new State of Society from the economic standpoint, that he had not even made it clear whether his villages of co-operation were to be self-sufficient, producing only for their own consumption, or whether they were to engage in commerce with other communities outside or even with the world at large. Probably he was too little versed in such matters to realise that the question had more than an academic interest. But his position had been definitely challenged by the economists at the meetings in 1817; and again on July 26, 1819, Major Torrens had renewed the attack. Torrens's speech at this last meeting was afterwards amplified into an article, which appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* for October, and which fairly presents the case against Owen's scheme from the standpoint of the orthodox economy of the day.¹ The reviewer points out that Owen had apparently not made up his mind on what basis the villages were to stand—whether to consume all their own products and thus be self-sufficing, or whether to engage in commerce with the outside.² In the former event, the reviewer pointed out, since the number of workmen

¹ The article in the *Edinburgh* was of course anonymous, but it reproduces so exactly not merely the arguments, but in many cases the very phrases used in Torrens's speech as reported in the *Times* (July 27, 1819), that it seems safe to attribute it to that gentleman.

² At the meeting of July 26, Torrens had actually asked the question "Are the commodities produced to be consumed in the villages, or sent to market?" and Owen had replied, "It is so arranged it may be one or the other" (*Times*, July 27, 1819).

in a community would not permit of a proper subdivision of labour, such as that required by our present manufacturing processes, the cost of production would be much higher than in the outside world. If, however, the community gave up the ideal of being self-sufficing and set itself to procure some of the commodities needed for its own consumption by exchanging some of its own surplus products, then it would at once become subject to the very fluctuations and perturbations of the market from which it was Owen's aim to save his colonists. Moreover, if the community wished to exchange on equal terms, it must consider all such questions as position with regard to the market, facilities for conveyance, fitness of soil and climate for the particular kind of manufacture or agriculture the products of which it proposed to exchange.

Criticism of this kind apparently forced upon Owen the necessity of defining his position. An opportunity presented itself in the following year. In May, 1820, Owen drew up by request a long Report on his plan for relieving public distress, which was laid before a committee of the county of Lanark. The report is of value as setting forth for the first time a clear and comprehensive statement of his economic views, and of the industrial organisation of the proposed villages.

Owen begins with an attempt to justify the assumption already referred to, as underlying his whole position. He seeks to show by a particular instance how the product of the soil could be multiplied by mechanical inventions, as the product of the spinning-wheel had already been multiplied. In the report of their visit

to New Lanark in August, 1819, which the Leeds deputation had presented to the Guardians of the Poor in that town, attention had been drawn to some experiments made by a Mr. Falla of Gateshead in substituting the spade for the plough as a means of breaking up the land and preparing it for sowing. Falla was a nursery gardener, and naturally therefore used the spade for cultivating his land. But being forced on occasion, for want of labour, to make use of the plough, he had been much struck by the inferiority of the results produced, and determined on a practical experiment. His neighbour's land, broken up by the plough and sown broadcast, produced in 1819 under favourable circumstances a crop of wheat representing about thirty-eight bushels to the acre. This was regarded as decidedly above the average. Falla's land, he tells us, was of slightly inferior quality, and not more highly manured. Nevertheless, by using the spade to work the soil, and sowing the seed in drills, he succeeded in two successive years, 1819 and 1820, in raising a crop which averaged between sixty-five and seventy bushels to the acre. As the cost in the case of spade labour but slightly exceeded, on Falla's calculation, the cost of working the land by the plough, the result was to raise the net profit by more than 50 per cent. The result is no doubt interesting as far as it goes; but of course no single experiment of the kind can be regarded as crucial, and the conditions of the particular experiment leave much to be desired. The land with which the comparison was made was not Falla's own; and he was hardly in a position therefore to institute an exact comparison of the amount of manure used, and other conditions of the experiment. And

above all, no comparison of this kind instituted for a limited period can be other than fallacious ; for it leaves out of account what is, after all, the most important factor, the relative exhaustion of the soil by the two methods. The Rothamsted experiments have taught us that, in the long run, we take out from the soil in the form of grain a fairly exact equivalent for what we have put into it in the form of manure. And the farmers of England, who have had the results of Falla's observations before them for more than eighty years, have not yet discarded the plough in favour of the spade.¹

Nevertheless it is on the result of this single and inconclusive experiment that Owen proceeds to base a new theory of agriculture. His readiness to generalise from such meagre data indicates perhaps that he had at length realised the need for justifying the economic assumptions which underlay his schemes. After giving a full account of Falla's experiment, and of the causes which contributed to the alleged superiority of the spade over the plough, Owen proceeds to explain that the cultivators of the soil have hitherto persisted in using the plough through ignorance and prejudice. Moreover spade husbandry requires higher qualities than our farmers at present possess : since the labour to be directed is that of men, not of animals, a knowledge of human nature and its attributes is required. " Closet theorists and inexperienced persons suppose that to exchange the plough for the spade would be to turn back in the

¹ A letter from Falla detailing the results of his experiments is appended to the *Report to the County of Lanark* (reprinted in *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, pp. 314-20).

road of improvement,—to give up a superior for an inferior implement of cultivation. Little do they imagine that the introduction of the spade, with the scientific arrangements it requires, will produce far greater improvements in agriculture, than the steam engine has effected in manufactures." It will prove more fruitful than all the inventions of Crompton and Arkwright. And this extraordinary change is even now at hand. "It will immediately take place; for the interest and well-being of all classes require it. Society cannot longer proceed another step in advance without it; and until it is adopted, civilisation must retrograde, and the working classes starve for want of employment."

Here then we have Owen's economic foresight vindicated, and the material well-being of the new colonist assured. It remains to consider how to dispose of the wealth which will be so abundantly produced under the new order of things.

It is now, Owen holds, sufficiently demonstrated that when their labours are wisely directed the inhabitants of the new colonies will without undue effort be able to produce much more than enough for their maintenance. Hence there will be little need for money or private property within the community. "It will be quite evident to all, that wealth of that kind which will alone be held in any estimation amongst them, may be so easily created to exceed all their wants, that every desire for individual accumulation will be extinguished. . . . As the easy, regular, healthy, rational employment of the individuals forming these societies will create a very large surplus of their own products, beyond what they will have any desire to consume, each may be freely



From an engraving after a picture by W. T. Fry published in 1821.

ROBERT OWEN.

permitted to receive from the general store of the community whatever they may require. This, in practice, will prove to be the greatest economy."

Part of the surplus will be devoted to the maintenance of the infants, the aged, and the sick ; part to the rich, who having advanced the necessary capital will not be expected to do any work themselves ; part will be needed by those whose work is not directly of a productive character ;¹ and part again will be required for paying taxes and public dues generally.² What still remains after these various claims have been satisfied, and after due provision has been made for the future—for each establishment will be provided with granaries and warehouses, where food may be stored against a season of famine³—will be exchanged with other like communities for part of the surplus of their special commodities ; and thus each colony will add to its luxuries by a kind of primitive foreign commerce. Precise details are given of the amount of land to be taken ; the mode of its cultivation ; the arrangement of the buildings in a square ; the provision for education ; the internal government of the colonies, and other matters. The only new point discussed, however, is that of the clothing. Owen favours a garb which should be as light and simple as possible, on the grounds of health, economy, beauty and sexual delicacy. He cites the national dress of the Romans and of the Scotch Highlanders as most nearly realising this ideal in practice. He adds, that the best fashion and material having once been settled, nobody

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, p. 282.

² *Ibid.*, p. 304 *et seq.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

will need to give a thought to questions of dress "for many years or perhaps centuries."¹

But the most interesting part of the Report is that dealing with the question of a standard of value. At the time when Owen wrote his Report the currency was the question of the hour. In 1797 an Act of Parliament had been passed to authorise the suspension by the Bank of England of cash payments. The suspension was, by the terms of the Act, to last until six months after the end of the war. The war had come to an end nearly five years ago; prices had long since fallen close to the normal; but the Government still hesitated to sanction the resumption of cash payments. In the previous year, however (1819), they had appointed a Committee under the presidency of Robert Peel the younger—the son of the rich manufacturer who had introduced the Factory Bill drafted by Owen—and in accordance with the recommendations of the Committee cash payments were to be resumed, not immediately, but by four successive stages. In May, 1820, the date of Owen's Report, the first of these stages had already been passed.

Every social reformer believes that he understands the part played by the currency, and those of the more thoroughgoing type are in substantial agreement in attributing famine, poverty and all other social evils to its agency. It was natural, therefore, especially at a time when currency questions occupied so much of men's thoughts, that Owen should find the secret of the national distress in the artificial standard of value accepted by civilised societies, and should foresee

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, pp. 291, 292.

imminent aggravation of that distress if the proposals of Peel's Committee were carried out. His line of argument may roughly be paraphrased as follows: Even before the great mechanical inventions of the last generation, the labour of a man, properly directed, was more than sufficient to maintain himself; by those inventions his powers of production have been multiplied fifty- or a hundred-fold—and yet the people are starving. Since, then, the cause of that poverty does not consist in any lack of wealth, or of the means of production, there must be some obstruction to the proper circulation of the wealth produced. In short, the cause must be sought in the mechanism of distribution. Now distribution in civilised countries is no longer carried on by a simple process of barter. An intermediate term has been introduced into the process; that intermediate term is the standard of value—in other words money. It is the imperfection of the standard which is the real cause of the stagnation of wealth, and the consequent poverty of so many of our fellow-countrymen in the midst of riches. For gold and silver are a purely arbitrary standard by which to measure commodities; they are, moreover, absurdly inadequate as a medium of exchange, as the late Government found when they wisely substituted a more elastic paper currency in 1797. But even bank notes constitute but a palliative. The true remedy for the evil is more radical. One of the first measures required “to let prosperity loose on the country is a change in the standard of value”; and as a result of thirty years' study and experience Owen propounds the doctrine “*That the natural standard of value is, in principle, human labour, or the*

combined manual and mental powers of men called into action."

Let, then, he continues, a labour-unit be fixed, on the analogy of a foot-pound or "horse power" in mechanics; and let the price of all commodities be fixed in terms of that unit, in accordance with the actual amount of human labour required for their production. The adoption of this simple and natural device would remove all the evils from which civilised society now suffers. Human labour, no longer subject to the caprice of the market, would acquire a new dignity; prices would no longer fluctuate; all commercial restrictions would be removed, and all markets thrown open; every transaction would proceed smoothly; the whole process of bargaining and higgling, with all its demoralising accompaniments, would disappear; and wealth would find its level as inevitably as water.

The Report was printed for a general meeting of the county held at Lanark on May 1, 1820, and was referred for consideration to a committee consisting of the sheriff and six other gentlemen. In the following November the committee presented a brief report, in which, while refraining from committing themselves to any definite opinion upon Owen's scheme as a whole, they expressed the view that it would be desirable that further experiments should be made in spade culture. After the reading of the committee's report, Sir James Stewart brought before the meeting a proposal made by Mr. Hamilton of Dalzell to let to the county from five hundred to seven hundred acres of land, "with a view to facilitate the formation of an establishment on Mr. Owen's plan, which would supersede the necessity

of erecting a Bridewell for the County." It was further proposed that the county should erect suitable buildings on the land, and that evildoers should be sent thither instead of to the Bridewell, and there transformed into respectable citizens. No action appears to have been taken on the proposal, or on Owen's Report.¹

The year 1821 saw the publication of the *Economist*, a periodical designed to advocate Owen's views, and the actual starting, on a small scale, of a Co-operative and Economical Society, of which a fuller account will be given in a later chapter. In June of the same year Owen's plans were again brought before the House of Commons. Maxwell moved in a feeble and unimpressive speech for the appointment of a Commission to report upon the establishment at New Lanark. The debate was notable for a change in the attitude of the speakers. Opposition on religious grounds to any countenance of Owen's schemes was again a prominent feature of the debate. Wilberforce spoke once more, and was supported on this occasion by Lushington and Canning. But the opposition which counted for most came from another quarter. Lord Londonderry based his objections to the motion mainly on the paternal character of Owen's proposed government—"The state of discipline recommended by Mr. Owen might be applicable enough to poor-houses, but it was by no means agreeable to the feelings of a free nation." And Hume followed to the same effect: "If Mr. Owen's system produced so much happiness with so little care, the adoption of it would

¹ *Autobiography*, Vol. IA, pp. 311-14. From a letter from Hamilton dated December 5, 1820, it appears that he proposed to let sixty acres at a nominal rent, and six hundred more at a rent of two-fifths of the produce. Further he promised a subscription of £1,000.

make us a race of beings little removed from the brutes, only ranging the four corners of a parallelogram, instead of the mazes of a forest." Other speakers ridiculed the "quadrangular paradises." In the event the motion was lost.¹

Owen himself did not come prominently before the public again until June of the following year, 1822. On the first of that month there was held a meeting of the British and Foreign Philanthropic Society, established, according to the *Times*,² mainly through Owen's exertions. The names of nearly all foreign ministers and ambassadors in the country, together with a long list of noblemen and other distinguished persons, appeared as vice-presidents. William Fry and Isaac Goldsmid were the treasurers. John Galt was one of the hon. secretaries, and the acting committee included Sir James Graham, T. W. Coke (afterwards Earl of Leicester), Brougham, Hume, and many other Members of Parliament, bankers, clergymen and philanthropists. The object of the Society was declared to be "to carry into effect measures for the permanent relief of the labouring classes, by Communities for mutual interest and co-operation, in which by means of education, example and employment, they will be gradually withdrawn from the evils induced by ignorance, bad habits, poverty and want of employment."³

At the first meeting, which took place in the Freemasons' Hall in London, the Earl of Blessington read the report of the committee, in which the establishment

¹ *Hansard*, June 26, 1821.

² Report of the meeting, June 4, 1822.

³ Report in *Robert Owen's Journal*, Vol. I., p. 157.

of communities on Owen's plan was recommended to the landed proprietor as "a safe and profitable mode of investing capital," and "as a practicable method of extinguishing the Poor's Rate in England." The secretaries announced a list of subscriptions amounting to about £50,000, including £10,000 from Owen, and £5,000 each from Hamilton of Dalzell, James Morrison and Henry Jones, of Cole House, Devon. The speakers, including James Maxwell, M.P., Sir W. de Crespigny, John Galt, the Earl of Blessington and Viscount Torrington, were enthusiastic in their testimony to the success of the establishment at New Lanark, and hopeful of the prospects of the similar experiment which the Society projected.

Owen, in returning thanks, found occasion to say a word for "the respectable individuals now denominated political economists." Their amiable disposition and good intentions, he declared, no one could doubt, but experience showed that "their theories and their doctrines could produce only misery to the human race."

Notwithstanding the enthusiastic tone of the meeting, and the substantial sum promised in the subscription list, we hear no more of the British and Foreign Philanthropic Society or of its projected experiment in community-forming.¹

In the autumn of this year, 1822, Owen went over to Ireland to spread the knowledge of his system there. He spent some months in a tour through the country accompanied by an agricultural expert and by Captain

¹ The proceedings of this, the first (and only ?) meeting are reported in the *Times*, June 4, 1822, and at greater length in *Robert Owen's Journal*, Vols. I. and II.

Macdonald of the Engineers, an enthusiastic disciple who afterwards followed him to New Harmony. He visited Dublin and Belfast, Kilkenny, Waterford, Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary, King and Queen's Counties, Clare, Meath and Down, spending some months in the south and west, as those districts were at the time most disturbed, and suffering the deepest distress.¹ He was welcomed by many of the nobility and gentry, and by the clergy, both Protestant and Catholic. He was even invited to Maynooth and expounded his system before an audience of Roman Catholic divines.² He called upon the Lord-Lieutenant and expatiated upon his plans for an hour and a quarter. "I had a very favourable hearing : he has the plan now under consideration, and I am to see him again."³

In a letter dated March 1, 1823, addressed to the nobility, gentry, clergy and inhabitants of Ireland, Owen gave the result of his observations during this tour. He found a soil fertile beyond his expectations, a suitable climate, rivers, harbours and natural resources sufficient, if properly used, to maintain in abundance a population manyfold greater than the seven millions then inhabiting the island. And yet he found these same millions, from the highest to the lowest, living in squalor and discomfort ; the landlords in constant anxiety lest the tenants should refuse to pay rent, and their own means of livelihood should thus disappear ; the middle classes

¹ *Report of Select Committee on the Poor in Ireland* (1823), p. 70.

² *New Existence of Man upon Earth*, Part IV., pp. 12, 16.

³ Letter to Mrs. Owen, October 31, 1822. In the same letter he mentioned dining on successive nights with the Bishop of Down and the Lord Mayor, and chronicles visits to Lord Cloncurry, Lord Carrick, the Duke of Leinster and the Bishop of Ossory.

engaged in incessant struggle against poverty; the peasantry so poor that women were eager to be employed for two pence a day, and strong active men were glad of the chance of working fourteen hours for eightpence. The responsibility for all this poverty and suffering he traced to the misguided system under which the Irish people were living; the remedy he promised to declare at a public meeting to be held on the 18th of the month in Dublin. On the appointed day the Rotunda was filled with an expectant crowd. The Lord Mayor was in the chair, and amongst those who had come to hear and to give their support to Owen were the Duke and Duchess of Leinster, The Earl of Meath, Lord Cloncurry, and a number of clergy.

In a speech which took three hours to deliver,¹ Owen sketched before the vast audience the outlines of the New System of Society. "I will now disclose to you," said he, "a secret, which till now has been hidden from mankind"—the secret that man's character is formed for him by circumstances, pre-natal and post-natal. The first part of the address is practically a re-statement of the argument in the *Essays on the Formation of Character*. In conclusion Owen briefly described his project of co-operative communities.

Owen's address is said to have been received with frequent applause. But the tone of the speakers in the discussion which followed was by no means friendly. The Protestant party was prominent. Three clergymen, Messrs. Dunne, Daly and Singer, opposed Owen's project on the ground that his system was contrary to

¹ The report of the speech in the *Patriot* (March 20, 1823) occupies eight and a half columns—nearly two entire pages—of close print.

revealed religion, immoral in its tendency, and generally subversive of the established order. It seems doubtful, however, whether these champions of the faith carried with them the sympathies of the audience. At any rate a further meeting, which was held in the same place on April 12, was well attended; the company, which again included peers and peeresses, and many persons eminent in literature and the sciences, being apparently not less distinguished than on the former occasion. At the second meeting a large painting illustrating one of the proposed communities was suspended above the orchestra; and the greater part of Owen's address was devoted to explaining the details of the arrangements in the proposed villages—the housing accommodation, the arrangements for warming and lighting, the clothing, the education of the children, and the organisation of the communal industry.

Though Owen's speech on this occasion, to judge from the length of the reports, must have occupied some two hours in delivery, he had still not completed his exposition, and a third meeting, not less crowded than those which preceded it, was held on April 19.¹ In this third speech Owen entered into the financial aspect of the question. He produced a series of calculations designed to show that a community of one thousand persons, men, women, and children, occupied partly in agriculture and partly in manufactures could, if their labour were properly directed and co-ordinated, produce enough not only to maintain themselves in abundance, and to provide for the education of their

¹ The pressure and heat at the meeting were so great that several ladies fainted (report in *Dublin Evening Mail*, April 23, 1823).

children, the maintenance of the sick and the aged, but also leave a large annual surplus, sufficient to extinguish in a few years any debt which might have been accumulated in the original purchase of the land and erection of the buildings. On Owen's calculations this surplus might be reckoned as ranging from £2,500 to £16,000 a year, according to the nature of the industries pursued by the happy villagers. A stormy discussion followed Owen's speech, the Rev. Mr. Singer again being prominent amongst the opposition.

The meeting was again adjourned until April 24. At this fourth meeting, which appears to have been of a semi-private nature, Owen's friends were in the majority. Sir T. Esmond, Lord Cloncurry, Æneas Macdonnell and General Browne spoke in favour of the scheme.¹ Finally, on May 3, was held the first meeting of the Hibernian Philanthropic Society. Owen was supported by Lord Cloncurry, Sir Frederick Flood, Sir William Brabazon, Sir Capel Molyneux, General Browne, the Hon. Mr. Dawson, and other persons of social position. A clergyman, the Rev. E. Groves, was one of the secretaries. A substantial list of subscriptions was announced, and the table at which the secretary sat was "literally covered with bank-notes." After some prefatory remarks by Lord Cloncurry, Owen made another lengthy speech, in the course of which he displayed his series of cubes, and explained in detail how they illustrated the divisions of existing society.

Of the Hibernian Philanthropic Society we hear

¹ For a report of the meeting see the *Patriot*, April 26, 1823. No mention of the meeting appears in *Robert Owen's Journal*, or in the *Dublin Report*.

no more after this year. But, as will be seen hereafter, the seed sown in the Dublin campaign bore fruit later.¹

In the course of this same year, 1823, a Select Committee of the House of Commons, of which Ricardo was a member, was appointed to consider the employment of the poor in Ireland. A memorial was presented to the Committee from the Hibernian Philanthropic Society praying that Owen's plan of villages of co-operation might be given a trial. Owen was himself called as a witness before the Committee, and was examined at considerable length upon the economic and the ethical aspects of his scheme. The Committee report that the scheme had attracted so much attention and interest, especially in Ireland, that they felt it their duty to examine it in detail and consider the tendency of the principles on which it is founded. Their conclusion is as follows :

“ But when it is considered, that Mr. Owen's plan is founded upon a principle that a state of perfect equality can be produced and can lead to beneficial consequences, your Committee consider this position so irreconcilable with the nature and interests of mankind, and the experience of all ages, that it is impossible to treat this scheme as being practicable. Your Committee concur in the opinion that a state in which an inequality of conditions offers the natural rewards of good conduct,

¹ Accounts of the Dublin meetings will be found in the *Dublin Report*, a pamphlet published in Dublin in 1823, subsequently reprinted in the first three volumes of *Robert Owen's Journal*, also in the *New Existence of Man upon Earth*, Part IV. Fairly full reports are to be found in the contemporary Dublin newspapers, the *Evening Mail* and the *Patriot*.

and inspires widely and generally the hopes of rising and the fear of falling in society, is unquestionably the best calculated to develop the energies and faculties of man, and is best suited to the exercise and improvement of human virtue. If Mr. Owen's establishments could be conducted according to his intentions, the idle and profligate would be placed in a situation equal to that which would be a reward to the industrious and virtuous. True it is, that Mr. Owen suggests that under his new arrangements idleness and profligacy might be altogether extirpated from society, but such an opinion is one which appears altogether visionary. Certainly your Committee feel every disposition highly to estimate the effects of good education and early moral habits, but to conceive that any 'arrangement of circumstances' can altogether divest a man of his passions and frailties, as they comprehend principles in themselves undeniable, is a result which can never be anticipated."

The Dublin meetings mark the conclusion of another stage in Owen's career. They were the last occasions on which he had the opportunity in this country of addressing an audience composed mainly of the well-to-do and educated classes. His appeals to them were, as we have seen, by no means unproductive, measured by the standard of the subscription-lists. But the enthusiasm evoked seems to have been shortlived, and none of these subscription lists ever matured. In later years Owen addressed his message to a wider audience. *Flectere si nequeo Superos, Acheronta movebo.* On his return, six years later, from America and the failure of his great experiment at New Harmony, he

seems to have found a more congenial environment amongst the working classes. For the rest of his life his appeal was addressed mainly to them ; and if the response which it evoked was not always of the precise kind at which he aimed, the effects produced were at any rate more enduring.

CHAPTER XIII

NEW HARMONY

FOR some years, as we have seen, Owen had been endeavouring, aided by committees formed of his wealthy and aristocratic followers, to raise the funds necessary to start an experimental Community. But so far none of these efforts had proved successful. But in the summer of 1824 an opening presented itself in an unexpected quarter, of which Owen was not slow to take advantage.

George Rapp was a small farmer born at Iptingen in Würtemberg in 1757. In early manhood he reacted strongly against the lifeless formalism of religion as manifested in the Churches of his native land, and gradually gathered round him a band of disciples who learned to look to him for spiritual instruction. Persecution followed ; and at length, in 1803, Rapp determined to lead his followers to the land of religious freedom. He sailed for America in that year with two or three companions, and purchased five thousand acres of uncultivated land near Pittsburg. In the next year six hundred of his followers joined him, and the Harmony Society was formed. The little community was composed of pious German peasants, sober, thrifty, and industrious. They flourished exceedingly and in a few years possessed mills and workshops, a tannery, a vineyard, a distillery

and grew all that was needed to supply themselves with food and clothing. In 1807 a new wave of religious feeling swept through the Society and the members generally renounced marriage, agreeing to live a celibate life.¹ At the same time they forswore the use of tobacco.

In 1814, being apparently dissatisfied with the site of their original settlement, the Society purchased some thirty thousand acres of Government land in Posey County, Indiana, on the banks of the Wabash, a tributary of the Ohio. In 1815 they sold their Pennsylvanian property, and the whole Society, numbering it is said about eight or nine hundred persons,² moved to their new home. The new settlement, which was named Harmonie or Harmony, consisted of a large quantity of very fertile flat land on the banks of the river, backed by low-wooded hills suitable for the vine. The soil soon brought forth abundantly. They cultivated cornland and pasture, magnificent orchards and far-stretching vineyards. The streets of the little city were planted with black locust-trees and mulberries—the latter to afford material for the silk-weaving which was an important feature in the communal industry. The dwelling houses for the settlers were built some of brick, some of wood; each with its sufficient garden enclosure filled with fruit-trees. There were also four large buildings to serve as community-houses; a substantial

¹ It does not appear that there was any compulsion in the matter. Nordhoff (*The Communistic Societies of the United States*, p. 73) says that those who refused to accept celibacy withdrew from the Society. But Hebert, who visited the Society at its new habitation at Harmony in 1822, says that marriages were permitted even at that date, and that the last had occurred nearly three years before his visit (*A Visit to the Colony of Harmony in Indiana*. London, 1825).

² Their numbers are said to have been recruited by emigration.



From an old print.

HARMONY.

brick house for Father Rapp ; a massive stone granary with loopholed walls, to serve at need as a defence against attack by Indians and others ; a wooden church, and a huge cruciform building of brick, with four doors, one at the extremity of each end of the cross. The upper storey of this building was supported inside by massive pillars of walnut, cherry and sassafras.¹

There were also a silk-factory, woollen-mill, saw-mill, brickyard, distillery, oil-mill and dye-works. Harmony soon became an important business and manufacturing centre for all the country round. Hebert, visiting it in 1822, found the people very prosperous and apparently very contented : but he notes that there was an absence of mirth or conviviality. Besides the church, the only undertaking not of a purely utilitarian character appears to have been a maze or labyrinth, such as that at Hampton Court, the walks walled in with hedges of beech, with a small summer-house at the centre, rude outside, but exquisitely furnished within. And even this we are told served a symbolic purpose, having been designed by Rapp to illustrate the wanderings of the soul through the world, and the finding of the desired haven at last in community-life.

In 1824 the colonists determined again to move their home. The ostensible cause of the change was the unhealthiness of the site ; but it was thought by some

¹ Hebert (*op. cit.*) describes this cruciform building as a church. But it is certain that the wooden building, which was furnished with a spire and two heavy bells, was intended for a church. *The New Harmony Gazette* (Vol. I., p. 22) calls the cruciform building the Town Hall : and it was in fact used in Owen's time for public meetings, concerts, etc. Robert Dale Owen (*op. cit.*, p. 212) writes of "a spacious cruciform brick hall."

to be part of Rapp's policy to keep his people on the move, lest, becoming too comfortable and prosperous, they should forget their faith and their vow of celibacy. At any rate, the Society commissioned Richard Flower, an Englishman who had helped to found a colony in the neighbouring State of Illinois, to sell their property for them.

In the summer of 1824 Flower came to Braxfield. Owen, as we have seen, was already acquainted with the Rappite experiment; indeed the knowledge of it had probably helped to shape his own ideal of a co-operative colony. It is no matter for wonder, then, that the offer made by Flower proved tempting. Here was a magnificent theatre already equipped for his great experiment, and in a country not yet in complete bondage to the prejudices and conventions of older societies. His children, for their part, were fascinated by the prospect. "I listened with delight," says Robert Dale Owen, "to Mr. Flower's account of a frontier life, and when one morning my father asked me 'Well, Robert, what say you, New Lanark or Harmony?' I answered without hesitation 'Harmony.'"

Owen accordingly went in December, 1824, to America to view the property, taking with him his son William and leaving Robert Dale Owen to look after the New Lanark Mills in his absence. And in April of the following year he bought the village as it stood, with all its industries and twenty thousand acres of land, for £30,000,¹ a price which seems not exorbitant. The

¹ R. Dale Owen, *op. cit.*, p. 211, *Nordhoff*, p. 76. In the *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. II., p. 353 (report of Robert Owen's speech at Philadelphia), the amount paid by Owen for the real and personal property together is given as about 140,000 dollars—say £28,000. In *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. I.,

original colonists forthwith returned to Pennsylvania, and established themselves not far from the site of their former settlement. The new colony was named Economy, and there the Rappites flourished for many years.¹

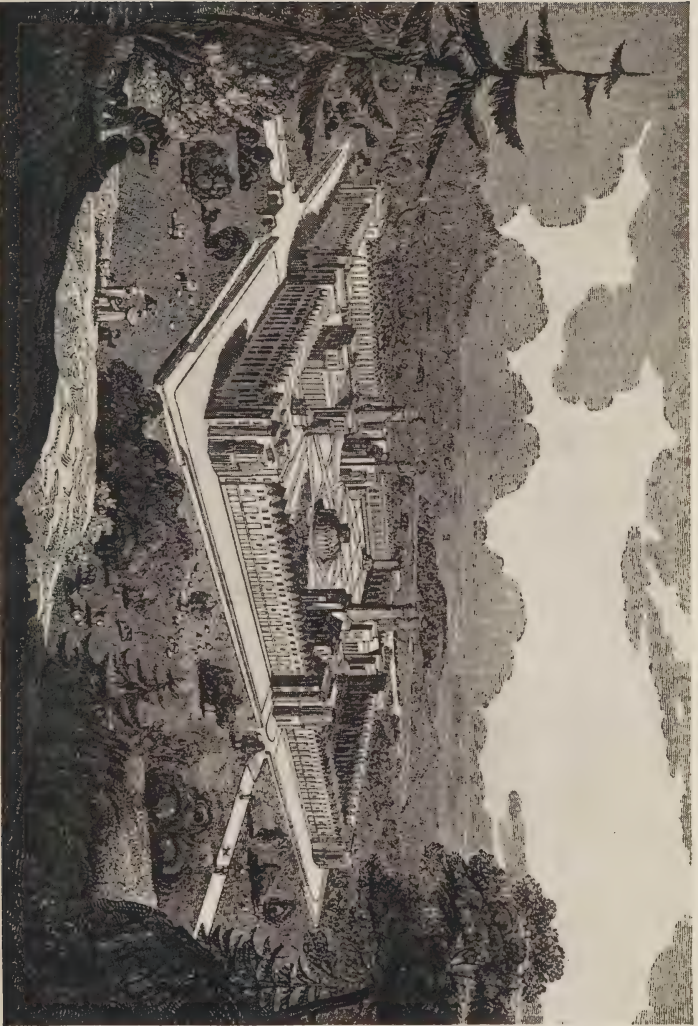
When Owen arrived in America he found that his fame had already preceded him. There had indeed been founded some years previously, in New York, a "Society for promoting Communities," which in 1822 had published an "*Essay on Common Wealths*," containing extracts from the *New View of Society* together with Melish's account of the Harmony Society. The New World was prepared therefore to welcome both the man and his doctrines. On February 25 and March 7, 1825, he delivered discourses in the Hall of Representatives at Washington before distinguished audiences, which included the President of the United States and several

p. 14, the land is said to have amounted to nearly 30,000 acres, of which less than 3,000 were cultivated by the Society. From a copy of the deed of agreement, dated May 21, 1825, which is preserved in the Manchester Correspondence, it appears that Rapp conveyed to Owen, "20,097 acres, together with all the tenements, buildings, implements and appurtenances, including by express agreement the Town Clock and bells, all the furniture of every description in the tavern," the copper brewing-kettles, dyeing-kettles and blacksmith's tools, for 95,000 dollars (= £19,451). The 40,000 odd dollars was no doubt the price of the live-stock and other personal property.

¹ The reader may be interested to learn the ending of the Rappite Community—for it came to an end just a hundred years from its beginning. After Rapp's death in 1847 the Society continued to prosper exceedingly, and became extremely wealthy. The numbers, however, seem to have steadily diminished. About 1890 several new members were elected, amongst them one John S. Duss, who ultimately became trustee and business manager for the Society. In 1903 the Society was reduced to six members, amongst whom were John Duss and his wife, and in the spring of that year the lands of the township, Economy, were sold, it is said for 4,000,000 dollars, to a land company; the proceeds of the sale being divided amongst the surviving members (*Philadelphia Press*, April 17, 1903; *Philadelphia Ledger*, May 2, 1903).

members of the Cabinet, Judges, Members of Congress, and other persons of importance. In the first address he confined himself to an outline of his doctrine of the influence of circumstances on belief and character. In the second he gave details of the projected community, and exhibited drawings and a wooden model of the proposed quadrangle. After describing the town of Harmony and its "infant manufactures," he went on to point out that the existing arrangement of the houses, etc., would not permit the settlement to form a fitting habitation for the ideal Community. "Therefore it will serve only a temporary but yet a useful temporary purpose for the objects which I have in view. It will enable me to form immediately a preliminary society, in which to receive a new population, and to collect, prepare and arrange the materials for erecting several such combinations as the model represents,¹ and for forming several independent yet united associations, having common property and one common interest." He went on to vindicate Harmony from the charge of unhealthiness, pointing out that of the eight hundred persons in the Society, only seven had died in the two preceding years. Anticipating possible objections on political

¹ From an article in the *Co-operative Magazine* for January, 1826, describing the progress made at New Harmony, we learn that "a favourable site has been marked out on which the new buildings are to be erected," and a reference is made to the frontispiece of the magazine, reproduced on the opposite page, which represents a quadrangular building placed in a fertile valley-bottom on the banks of a winding river, apparently intended for the Wabash. The article continues, "It is confidently expected that by the latter end of this year, the members of the community will exchange their present residence for one in which the most skilful combination of scientific arrangements will be made subservient to the various purposes of social and domestic life." But the intention, if ever formed, must soon have been dropped.



From a woodcut in the Co-operative Magazine, 1828.

MODEL OF ROBERT OWEN'S PROPOSED COMMUNITY.

grounds, he pointed out that it would be as easy for communities of the kind to confederate themselves into a State, as it was for the several States of the American Union to confederate themselves into a nation, and that defence against aggression could be secured by training the schoolboys in the communal schools in military and naval exercises.

Here, then, "in the heart of the United States," Owen proclaimed, "the Power which governs and directs the Universe and every action of man . . . permits me to announce a new empire of peace and goodwill to men." He concluded his address, it is stated, by inviting the "industrious and well-disposed of all nations" to come to New Harmony.¹ At any rate, some kind of manifesto was issued, inviting those who were in sympathy with the scheme to join the new Community.²

There came, in fact, in the early months of 1825 to Harmony—or New Harmony, as it was henceforth to be known—some hundreds of persons from all parts of the Union, who if they could not all be described as industrious, and did not all share Owen's hopes of a new state of society, were all, no doubt, well disposed to a communal life as they severally conceived it, and found at least common ground in their dissatisfaction with the existing order. Owen never had the opportunity of selecting his recruits, as appears to have been his original intention, for he found the settlement filled to overflowing on his arrival. Eight hundred, it is said, came within the first few weeks, and by October, 1825, the

¹ Noyes, *History of American Socialisms*, p. 35. The words do not appear in the address as published in the *New Harmony Gazette* (Vol. II).

² Lockwood, *The New Harmony Communities*, p. 89.

number had increased to nine hundred.¹ William Owen, writing to his father from New Harmony on October 24, 1825, says, "We have been much puzzled to know what to do with those who profess to do anything and everything: they are perfect drones, and can never be satisfied here. We have got rid of a good many such, although we still have a few left." And Robert Dale Owen, who made the acquaintance of the Community early in the following year, describes them as a "heterogeneous collection of radicals, enthusiastic devotees to principle, honest latitudinarians and lazy theorists, with a sprinkling of unprincipled sharpers thrown in."²

On April 25, 1825, Robert Owen delivered an address to the hundreds assembled at New Harmony. He pointed out that a change from the individualistic to the social system' could not be made all at once. Time was needed for the denizens of the future Community to become acquainted with each other: time was also needed to enable the inhabitants to change the selfish habits bred by individualism for the superior habits necessary in a social state. There must therefore be a half-way house, and, he continued, "New Harmony, the future name of this place, is the best half-way house I could procure for those who are going to travel this extraordinary journey with me; and although it is not intended to be our permanent residence, I hope it will be found not a bad traveller's tavern, in which we shall remain only until we can change our old garments, and fully prepare ourselves for the new state of existence, into which we hope to enter."

¹ *Noyes*, loc. cit.; *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. II., p. 30.

² *Threading my Way*, p. 254.

He then pointed out that it might be found necessary that there should at first be some pecuniary inequality, since it was essential for the proper starting of the scheme to import a few men of science from the outside, who would not be satisfied with the plain fare and simple accommodation which would be the lot of the ordinary workers. For himself, however, he wished no better accommodation than the rest, and in any case there would be no personal inequality—no distinction of rank.

Owen then proceeded to read the proposed Constitution of the Preliminary Society. At the outset he, as founder and sole proprietor, proposed to appoint the committee of management, with the proviso that at the end of the first year the members should elect representatives on the committee.¹ The Society was to be open to all the world, except "persons of colour." The members accepted no pecuniary liability. They were to bring with them their own furniture and effects; they were to work, under the direction of the committee, at some trade or occupation; a credit was to be set against each name at the public store for the amount of useful work done; and against this credit a debit was entered for goods supplied. At the end of the year the balance would be placed to the credit of the member; but he was not at liberty to withdraw any part of it in cash, without the consent of the committee. He could, however, leave the Society at a week's notice, and withdraw his balance.

Owen had intended to prohibit the distillation of

¹ In fact the members appear to have elected three out of the committee of seven persons, from the outset (see *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. I., p. 102).

whiskey, but found that this step was impossible at the present time. He hoped, however, that it might be effected in the future.¹ He recommended that the articles consumed by the members should, as far as possible, be of American origin, and especially those that the Society itself could produce, so that it might ultimately be self-sufficing. Finally he hoped that at the end of three years the members would be prepared to constitute a Community of Equality, "and so for ever bury all the evils of the old selfish individual system."

At the beginning of June Owen left New Harmony, and returned to Europe early in August. On October 1, 1825, appeared the *New Harmony Gazette*, with the motto, "If we cannot reconcile all opinions, let us endeavour to unite all hearts." In its early numbers we have an interesting picture of the state of the Society at that date. Nothing is said of the agricultural prospects. As regards the manufactures we learn that, though the Community possessed well-equipped mills and workshops of various kinds, they could not use them to the full for want of skilled workmen. The sawmill was doing good business with all the country round; the hat manufactory and the boot-making shop were doing well; the manufacture of soap, candles and glue had exceeded the requirements of the Community. But the dye-works and the pottery were standing idle for want of hands, and for the same cause the cotton and woollen mills could turn out but a small weekly product.

¹ William Owen writes in August, 1825, stating that a resolution had been passed to the effect that no spirituous liquors should be retailed in New Harmony. (Quoted in the *Co-operative Magazine*, January, 1826.)

A letter from William Owen, who had been left in charge of the colony during his father's absence, dated New Harmony, December 16, 1825, gives a detailed account of their position and of the difficulties of founding a colony in the undeveloped West.

“MY DEAREST FATHER,

“We were astonished to hear that you had advertised for so many hands, whom you wished to engage as members or hired workmen, for it will be impossible to give them houses or even rooms here, until we shall have built more houses for their accommodation. Of many of those for whom you advertised we have already sufficient numbers and excellent workmen.”

* * * * *

He explains, however, that they need, amongst others, “masons, bricklayers, wheelwrights, carpenters, machine makers, potters (confidential men likely to remain here), and above all good cooks and washerwomen, and laundresses. The tavern in particular requires a good cook and also all the boarding houses. If you can, I would advise to hire at Louisville a black man cook, we want him here sadly, particularly as you expect to bring so many people here. But although I have said we want these men to make our workshops full and perfect, I would at the same time repeat and impress upon your mind that *we have no room for them*. I believe I expressed the same opinion to you in my letter to New York. I was therefore surprised that you should advertise for so many mechanics; we had applications for membership almost every day from

various quarters and from then we have received more than gone away. We have received a good many valuable mechanics since you left us, and all the brick and frame houses are filled except one, which we reserved for those you might bring with you, it having been vacated lately. We shall find some difficulty in finding room for those you bring with you, and as to those with whom you may engage in New York, I do not know what we can do with them. And as for building houses, that is at present out of the question. We have no lime, no rocks, (ready blasted) no brick, no timber, no boards, no shingles, nothing requisite for building, and as to getting them from others, *they are not to be had in the whole country.* We must ourselves produce the whole of them, before we can build, we must dig and burn the lime, dig and blast the rocks, mould and burn the bricks, fell and hew the timber, fell and saw the boards and split the shingles, and to do all these things, we have no hands to spare, or the branches of business in the Society must stop, and they cannot stop, or the whole Society would stop too. These are the facts as they really are and you will find them so when you come. I have not exaggerated the difficulties or the time it will take to prepare for building. As this is winter of course we can do but little in this line. As to fitting up other houses, such as the church or granary, it is out of the question. We have no lumber to make partitions of, and there is none to be had, till we saw it, in the country, which we cannot do till the creeks rise. Besides, the granary is full of grain, and the church is the school. Further, no means of cooking whatever. Besides, as McDonald observes,

we must not immediately curtail their comforts and conveniences, which would necessarily be if put in such places to sleep. On this account I had hoped you would have brought no Eastern mechanics, and also because those who are already accustomed to a Western life would put up better with such accommodations because accustomed to them more and we can get plenty of them, when we can receive them and have houses for them. If you can bring with you some stoves from Louisville foundries, and also abundance of stove pipes, we could accommodate more people in our present houses; the stoves need not be large, the cheaper the better. We should want perhaps 20 stoves. We have no bedding for any body, not even for those along with you; we have no feathers, no ticking, no sheets, no blankets. You must buy some, or every one must bring with them enough for themselves. The sugar is gone, quite gone, and the river being low, we can get none till it rises. We use about 2 barrels per week. The store will be quite empty in six weeks. We are all in good spirits and the gentlemen of the Committee desire best remembrances.

“Yours truly,

“WILLIAM OWEN.”

In its non-productive activities, however, as we learn from the *Gazette*, the Society had more success to record. The tavern was constantly filled with visitors from the neighbouring States, who came to stay at New Harmony. The military were well organised. There was already a company of Artillery, one of Infantry, and a corps of Riflemen; whilst a company of Veterans and a

company of Fusiliers were being formed. About one hundred and thirty children were boarded and educated at the schools. Finally, the need of recreation had not been overlooked. There was a good band, and many of the children showed decided musical talent. A ball was held every Tuesday evening in the Town Hall (the large cruciform building already described); there was a concert every Friday; and Wednesday evenings were given up to a public meeting and discussion on all matters relating to the well-being of the Society. From other sources we learn that the church and Town Hall were thrown open on Sundays for the meetings of different religious sects, and that ministers of all denominations were given full liberty to preach.¹

In November of this same year 1825, Robert Owen returned to America, accompanied by his son Robert, and by one or two disciples, amongst them Captain Macdonald, formerly a prominent member of the Edinburgh Practical Society.² He brought with him also a model, nearly six feet square, of the proposed Community Buildings which he presented to the President of the United States, for the uses of the General Government.³

Owen returned to New Harmony on January 12, 1826, bringing with him some of those men of science to whom reference had been made in his speech of April 27. Their leader was one William Maclure, a native of Ayr in Scotland, who had already made Owen's acquaintance in a visit which he had paid to New Lanark in July,

¹ Letter dated December, 1825, printed in *Co-operative Magazine*, February, 1826.

² See below, Chapter XV.

New Harmony Gazette, Vol. I., p. 118.

1824. He had been delighted with all that he saw there, especially with the education of the children, and with Owen's plans for reorganising society "so as to drown the self in an ocean of sociality."¹ Maclure had come to America towards the close of the eighteenth century, and had spent several years in making single-handed a geological survey of the United States, travelling on foot through every State and Territory in the Union. The results of his gigantic labours were published in 1809. He had subsequently helped to found the Philadelphia Academy of Science, and was for many years the President of that body. With his love of natural science was joined a passionate enthusiasm for popular education. He had long been ambitious to found an agricultural school for the children of the poor, *i.e.* a school somewhat after the model of Fellenberg's school for the children of peasants, in which "physical labour should be combined with moral and intellectual culture," the labours of the children in the fields helping to defray the cost of their schooling in the classroom. A man of considerable wealth, he had started an experimental school of the kind on a large scale in Spain, but was compelled to abandon the scheme on account of the unsettled state of that country. Though by no means agreeing with all Owen's economic views, he was sufficiently in sympathy with him to be willing to co-operate in the New Harmony experiment, mainly, no doubt, because he saw in it a favourable opportunity for giving effect to his educational theories. He agreed therefore, to advance some of the capital needed to float

¹ From Maclure's Diary, which is preserved in the New Harmony Public Library.

the scheme, and to give his personal assistance to the Community Schools.¹

With Maclure came Thomas Say, a distinguished zoologist, afterwards known as author of an *American Entomology* and an *American Conchology*, the latter work having been printed at New Harmony; Charles Lesueur, a French naturalist and draughtsman, who drew some of the engravings in the conchology above referred to, known also for his work on American freshwater fishes; Gerard Troost, a distinguished Dutch chemist and geologist, afterwards Professor of Chemistry at Nashville University; Joseph Neef, an ex-soldier, who had been a master under Pestalozzi at Yverdon; Piquet d'Arusmont, afterwards the husband of Frances Wright; Madame Marie Fréteot (both Pestalozzian teachers), and several others. The distinguished party travelled by boat down the Ohio to New Harmony—"the Boatload of Knowledge," as it was called—reaching that place on January 12, 1826.

It had been Owen's original intention, as we have seen, to wait for three years—*i.e.* until about the end of 1827, before attempting to constitute a Community of Equality. On his arrival, however, in January, 1826, he seems to have been so much pleased, both with the material prosperity of the colony and with the progress made by the members of the Community in the principles

¹ It is not clear how much money Maclure actually advanced. The original intention had been that he and Owen should each put down a like sum. Maclure subsequently stipulated that his risk should be limited to £2,000 (10,000 dollars). Later, Owen expressly stated that "Mr. Maclure before he went (to New Harmony) advanced a part, and only a small part, of the purchase money for the real property." (Address at Philadelphia on June 27, 1827, reported in *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. II., p. 353.)

of true fellowship and co-operation, that he proposed to them that they should cut short their period of probation, and enter at once upon the final and perfect stage of social development.

Accordingly a general meeting of the residents was summoned on January 25, which straightway elected a committee of seven persons to draw up a constitution for the community. Amongst the seven were William and R. Dale Owen and Captain Donald Macdonald. The committee reported to the convention on February 1, and the convention at its ninth sitting, on Sunday, February 5, 1826, finally adopted a constitution. The document begins with a statement of objects and principles and a profession of faith. Then follow the articles of union. Article No. I prescribes the title—"The New Harmony Community of Equality."

Article No. II. runs—"All the members of the Community shall be considered as one family, and no one shall be held in higher or lower estimation on account of occupation.

"There shall be similar food, clothing and education, as near as can be, furnished for all according to their ages and, as soon as practicable, all shall live in similar houses, and in all respects be accommodated alike.

"Every member shall render his or her best service for the good of the whole."

The Community was to be divided into six departments—Agriculture; Manufactures; Literature, Science and Education; Domestic Economy; General Economy; Commerce: each department should again be subdivided into occupations. Each occupation should choose an Intendent, the Intendents should choose four

Superintendents—and all these officers, together with the Secretary, should constitute the Executive Council. The real estate was to be vested in the Community as a whole.¹

Thus the Society at one step emerged from the chrysalis stage of modified individualism into the winged glory of pure communism. Prior to February 5, the value of the labour of each individual had been reckoned up and placed to his credit at the Communal Stores, and he had drawn upon this credit to procure whatever provisions or other articles he required. But in the new Society there was to be no discrimination between one man's labour and another's; nor any buying and selling within the bounds of the Community. Each man was to give of his labour according to his ability and to receive food, clothing and shelter according to his needs.

In a private letter written by W. Pelham (afterwards for some months editor of the *New Harmony Gazette*) to his son, dated February 8, three days after the adoption of the constitution, we have an interesting picture of the enthusiasm prevailing at the time. After describing the free and exhaustive criticism to which the draft constitution had been subjected, and its final acceptance, the writer proceeds—"Hitherto there had been much irregularity of effort, the consequences of which nearly paralysed the energies of the population: but at length I see the way clear, and I see the utter impossibility of such a state of things again recurring. The several parts of the great machine will be so admirably adapted to each other as to effect the most

¹ *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. I., pp. 161, 162.

valuable purposes. I anticipate that in six months the New Harmony machine will go like clockwork." . . . Again, referring to the pending election of officers, he writes—"This is an anxious time (not with a view to the final success of our principles, which must infallibly succeed sooner or later, but) with a view to the speedy accomplishment of the purposes for which we are associated." The writer's tribute to Owen is worth quoting—"He is an extraordinary man, a wonderful man—such a one indeed as the world has never before seen. His wisdom, his comprehensive mind, his practical knowledge, but above all, his openness, candour and sincerity, have no parallel in ancient or modern history."¹

As Mr. Pelham surmised, it would appear that the new constitution, with all that it implied, was adopted with but few dissentient voices. Amongst the dissentients, however, was Captain Macdonald. In an interesting letter which appeared in the *New Harmony Gazette* of February 22, he explains why he could not join the new Community. Practically he objected to the whole system of representative government, even a thoroughly democratic government, such as that proposed by the new constitution. In his view the machinery of repre-

¹ I owe this letter to Professor Earl Barnes, who kindly lent me a copy which he had himself made from the original (now at New Harmony) in April, 1890. A writer who visited New Harmony in August, 1825, gives similar testimony to the impression produced by Owen's character. "Perhaps there has seldom been an instance in modern times where a benevolent individual has obtained such a complete ascendancy over the minds of others, and such a thorough conviction of the rectitude of his intentions, as this gentleman established during his short stay of only a few months among us. Every one seemed to repose upon his promises with undoubting confidence." (Quoted in the *Co-operative Magazine* of February, 1826, p. 49.)

sentation and election would inevitably lead to suspicions, jealousies and factions. He held that the organisation of industry and all the details of the working of the Society should be settled in the open family assembly, that all might know what was going on, and that each individual man or woman might feel that he or she had a voice in all the decisions arrived at. Clearly a Community of eight hundred or one thousand persons was too unwieldy to be worked on these lines. With such numbers some form of representation or delegation was a mechanical necessity. Macdonald's strictures, however, were probably not without justification. The constitution, which was no doubt partly modelled on the system in force at the New Lanark Mills, was too elaborate; and in a Community of Equality the mere existence of Intendents and Superintendents constituted the most glaring of inequalities. Macdonald's views were apparently to some extent shared by others. For the new constitution did not march in accordance with the hopes of its authors. At any rate the general assembly on February 19 passed a resolution requesting Owen to assist for one year in conducting and superintending the affairs of the Society.

Then for a time all seemed to promise well. An editorial in the *Gazette* of March 22 breathes a spirit of optimism worthy of Owen himself. The article begins by admitting that hitherto they have spent too much time in debate, and in the endeavour to reconcile conflicting opinions. "We have discovered that our energies have been wasted in fruitless efforts, each one endeavouring to convince the others that he alone possessed the power of unlocking the treasures of social

life. This error is happily dispelled. By the indefatigable attention of Mr. Owen, a degree of order, of regularity and system has been introduced into every department of business which promises increase and permanency. The town now presents a scene of active and steady industry, the effects of which are visible and palpable. The Society is gradually becoming really, as well as ostensibly, a Community of Equality, based on the equal rights and equal duties of all. Our streets no longer exhibit groups of idle talkers—but each one is busily engaged in the occupation he has chosen for his employment. Our public meetings, instead of being the arena of contending orators, have assumed a different character, and are now places of business. . . . No vain disputations now grate upon the ears of patient industry.”¹

But the Society was too large and its elements too heterogeneous for all to work smoothly. William Maclure, writing to Professor Silliman on March 16, explains that they had succeeded better than they had any reason to expect. But they “found it much easier to assimilate a few having the same pursuits than many having different occupations.” There were, moreover, it is evident, social inequalities, religious differences, and national idiosyncrasies to create disunion, or at lowest, to hinder the complete amalgamation required. “It was therefore decided,” continues Maclure, “to divide into small communities the land surrounding Harmony, and already two Societies are formed, one with 1,200 acres of good land, the other with 1,100 acres, at 83.60 and at 85 dollars per acre, seven years credit being allowed, and 5 years afterwards to pay it” by annual

¹ *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. I., p. 207.

instalments. Money was also advanced for stocking the land, etc.¹

The two Communities were named Macluria and Feiba Peveli, the first separating, it is said, mainly on religious grounds, the second, which consisted chiefly of English country folk, on racial differences. These two Societies adopted a common profession of faith, and a constitution differing little from that of the parent Society. The most notable difference was that the executive powers were vested in a non-elective body—a council of fathers—who in Macluria were to be the five oldest members of the community under the age of sixty-five. In Feiba Peveli the limiting age was fixed at fifty-five. Both societies appear to have contemplated a system of pure communism.²

In a leader commenting on the formation of the two new Societies, the *New Harmony Gazette* remarks “that the formation of communities is now pretty well understood among us, and is entered upon like a matter of ordinary business.”³ Again, in an address

¹ The letter from which the above extract is quoted originally appeared in *Silliman's Journal*. It is reprinted in the *Co-operative Magazine* for November, 1826.

² For an account of Macluria see *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. I., p. 209. For Feiba Peveli, *Ibid.*, p. 225. The name calls for explanation. Stedman Whitwell, its godfather and presumable founder, invented a system of nomenclature under which the name of a place should contain an indication of its latitude and longitude; *a* or *b* representing 1, *e* or *d* = 2, the diphthong *ei* = 8, and so on. Thus Feiba Peveli = 38.11 N., 87.53 W. Under this system New Harmony (38.11 N., 87.55 W.) might be called Ipba Veinul; Orbiston (55.34 N., 4.3 W.) would be Ulio Ovuoti; London and Paris might be known henceforth as Lafa-Tovutu and Oput Tedou respectively. The system is recommended by its author as agreeable alike to the man of common sense and to the man of taste! (*New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. I., pp. 226, 227.)

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. I., p. 230.

published on May 10 containing a retrospect of the previous year, Robert Owen, with his perennial optimism, finds only cause for congratulation in the multiplication of Communities. "In one short year," he says, "the mass of confusion, and in many instances of bad and irregular habits, has been formed into a Community of mutual co-operation and equality, now proceeding rapidly towards a state of regular organisation ; and out of it two other Communities have been formed and are located in the immediate neighbourhood. Both are in close union with this Community and with each other ; both are founded on the true communistic principles"—the principles of equality and common property. Macluria, indeed, would have grain and vegetables of their own growing to supply the year's consumption ; and had already built and occupied comfortable temporary cabins. Feiba also had much land under cultivation, and seemed assured of ultimate success.

On July 4, Independence Day, 1826, Owen delivered at New Harmony an oration inaugurating the era of mental independence : and thereafter the *Gazette* bears on its title page the legend "First (Second, etc.) year of Mental Independence."¹

It happens that we have pictures from several different hands of the state of New Harmony in the early months of 1826. Robert Dale Owen gives a few pages to it in his *Autobiography*.² Reaching New Harmony early in 1826 in his twenty-fifth year, full of faith in the new order of society which his father was about to inaugurate, he was intoxicated with the freedom, the good fellowship, the enthusiasm which he found prevailing. It was,

¹ *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. I., p 329.

² pp. 244 *et seq.*

indeed, the land of youth and hope. There were concerts and weekly dances, and all manner of social intercourse ; there were, above all, the weekly discussions in which matters of high moment were debated with all the freedom and fine seriousness of youth. The housing, no doubt, was of the rudest, the fare of the simplest, and there was plenty of hard work for those who cared to undertake it. But these things do but add zest to a picnic, or to a camping-out expedition. And here was a picnic on whose issues depended the regeneration of the world.

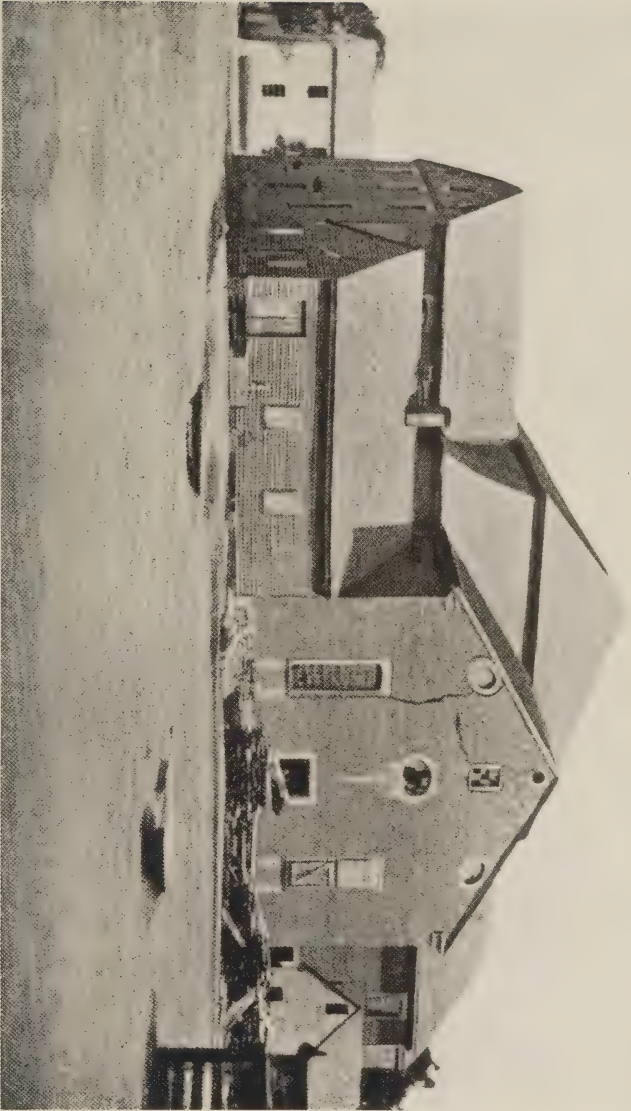
Young Owen's zeal impelled him to volunteer for all the hard work that came along. He helped to pull down some of the oldest and most dilapidated of the village cabins ; he took a turn at sowing wheat, until his arm refused any longer to perform its office ; he helped to bake bread, and by a unanimous vote was awarded the product of his labours for his own sole consumption. But he soon left these undertakings to others, and found more congenial employment in helping to edit the *Gazette*, and in teaching in the schools. He took also a prominent part in the government of the infant colony.

On April 13, 1826, there came to New Harmony a distinguished European traveller, Charles Bernard, Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach. The Duke was an acute and interested observer, and tells us a good deal about the real condition of affairs. He lodged at the Community tavern and found the accommodation passable. In the tavern he met a man "very plainly dressed, about fifty years of age, of rather low stature," who proved to be Owen himself. Owen showed him

all over the Community, and expounded to him all his plans and his hopes for the future, and the Duke marvelled at Owen's invulnerable belief in his ability to remake the world. The Duke tells us that Owen's faith was by no means shared by the New Harmonites with whom he talked. Moreover, he saw signs of the early breaking-up of the Society. He talked with Mr. Jennings (one of the committee of seven who had drawn up the new constitution, and for some time editor of the *Gazette*). Mr. Jennings, he found, "intended to leave the place and go to Philadelphia. Many other members have the same design, and I can hardly believe the Society will have a long duration. Enthusiasm, which soon abandons its subjects, as well as the itch for novelty, have contributed much to the formation of the Society. In spite of the principles of equality which they recognise, it taxes the feelings to live on the same footing with others indiscriminately, and eat with them at the same table. . . ." Two things specially impressed the Duke: the extreme frugality of the living, and the difficulty of amalgamating different social grades. In fact he found that in their amusements and social meetings, at all events, the better educated classes kept together. The working men, he notes on his first evening, did not join in the dance in the public hall, but read the newspapers scattered on the tables; and later he remarks that when partners were assigned for the cotillon by drawing numbers, "the young ladies turned up their noses at the democratic dancers who often in this way fell to their lot." Even at the lectures the better educated members kept themselves together and took no notice of the others; but the Duke observed that

some tatterdemalions placed themselves on the platform close to Owen. Again, there was a distinctive Community dress, which was worn almost exclusively by the more aristocratic members. The costume of the men consisted of "wide pantaloons buttoned over a boy's jacket made of light material, without a collar; that of the women of a coat reaching to the knee and of pantaloons such as little girls wear among us." The Duke even hazarded the remark that these dresses "have a good appearance." But "Hermann's a German."

But after all, the most prominent item in the Duke's narrative is the dancing. During the first six days of his visit he witnessed dancing every evening. On the Tuesday there was a formal ball in the public hall—the cruciform building already referred to. The Duke notes that there was "a particular place marked off for the children to dance in, in the centre of the hall, where they could gambol about without running between the legs of the grown persons." But on the other evenings the dances were impromptu affairs, or were merely sandwiched in between lectures and concerts. Here is an account of his Sunday evening in the settlement. "In the evening I paid visits to some ladies, and saw the philosophy and the love of equality put to a severe test with one of them. She is named Virginia, from Philadelphia, is very young and pretty, was delicately brought up, and appears to have taken refuge here on account of an unhappy attachment. While she was singing and playing very well on the piano, she was told that the milking of the cows was her duty, and that they were waiting. Almost in tears she betook herself to this servile employment, execrating the Social



From a photograph.

THE TOWN HALL, HARMONY, INDIANA.

System and its so much prized equality. After the cows were milked, in doing which the young girl was trod on by one and mired by another, I joined an aquatic party with the young ladies and some young philosophers in a very good boat upon the inundated meadows along the Wabash. The evening was beautiful, it was moonlight and the air was very mild. The beautiful Miss Virginia forgot her stable experiences, and regaled us with her sweet voice. Somewhat later we collected at House No. 2, appointed for the School House, where all the young ladies and gentlemen of quality assembled. We amused ourselves during the whole remainder of the evening dancing cotillons and waltzes, and with such animation as rendered it quite lively. New figures had been introduced among the cotillons, among which was one called 'The new Social System.' Several of the ladies made objection to dancing on Sunday; we thought, however, that in this sanctuary of philosophy such prejudices should be entirely discarded, and our arguments, as well as the inclinations of the ladies, gained the victory." . . .

On the following day the Duke was invited to dinner in House No. 4. "Some gentlemen had been out hunting and brought home a wild turkey, which must be consumed. The turkey formed the whole dinner. Upon the whole I cannot complain either of an overloaded stomach or a headache from the wine. The living was frugal in the strictest sense."

The Duke visited Communities Nos. 2 and 3 and notes that Maclure had broken off from the parent Society mainly on religious grounds; and Feiba Peveli from social prejudice, the latter Community consisting

chiefly of English country people, who found the cosmopolitanism of New Harmony little to their taste.¹

It is hardly necessary to say, of any Community founded under Robert Owen's inspiration, that a school for the children was one of the first objects of the Society's care. Robert Dale Owen tells us that when his father left New Harmony in June, 1825, after starting the Preliminary Society, he left behind him a school in which one hundred and thirty children were boarded, clothed and educated at the public expense.² The first number of the *Gazette* (October 1, 1825) contains an advertisement of the school, intimating that there were vacancies for a limited number of children from the outside.³ The inclusive fees for outsiders were 100 dollars a year. But when William Maclure arrived on the scene in January, 1826, he took entire charge of the schools, which hereafter appear to have been run as a separate undertaking, under the name of the Education Society. In the letter to Professor Silliman already cited, Maclure explains his views on education. Children, he says, have hitherto been unjustly treated, by being given tasks which were useless and, to them, unintelligible. The propensity to imitation, he points out, is very strong in children, and he proposed to take advantage of this propensity to teach them the trades and occupations followed by their elders, as far as their

¹ *Travels through N. America during the years 1825-6*, by H.R.H. Charles Bernard, Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach (translated), Philadelphia, 1828, Vol. II., pp. 106-123.

² *Threading my Way*, p. 229. It appears, however, from Owen's speech of May 27, 1827 (quoted below), that a great part of the cost came out of Owen's own pocket.

³ Lockwood, *op. cit.*, p. 193, states that these pupils came from as far east as Philadelphia and New York.

feebler strength would permit. In that way their willing interest would be secured and—an important point for the poor—the products of their labour in field or workshop would go far to defray the cost of their subsistence and their education in the necessary arts of writing, arithmetic, in natural history, etc. Moreover, as they would never be idle they would be always kept from mischief. “All our vacations are injurious to youth and only serve the caprice or the pecuniary interests of the Master.” In a letter dated July 4, 1826, addressed to the Editor of the *Revue Encyclopédique*,¹ Maclure gives further particulars of the progress made at New Harmony. The Education Society had purchased from Owen, at a price apparently of 30,000 or 40,000 dollars in all, 900 acres of good land for the experimental farm, several houses large and small, “two large granaries and stables for the experimental farming school; a large public building now converted into workshops for the instruction of the boys in the useful arts” [the latter was apparently the Rappites’ wooden church] “and a hall to be employed as a museum, for meetings, lectures, &c.” There were nearly four hundred children already in the schools, divided as follows: one hundred between two and five years of age, under the direction of Madame Frétegeot; nearly two hundred from five to twelve years old, under the direction of M. Neef with his four daughters and his son—all pupils of Pestalozzi; and eighty in the church under M. Piquéal d’Arusmont, who taught the useful arts and mathematics. The children under M. Piquéal had produced in six weeks produce to the value of 900 dollars. Owen’s two sons were engaged

¹ Reprinted in the *Co-operative Magazine* for December, 1826.

in the schools, and MM. Say, Troost and Lesueur taught natural history, chemistry, drawing, etc.

Robert Dale Owen, after trying his hand, as already said, at various agricultural and domestic employments, took charge for a time of the elder boys, and found the task of managing them no sinecure. They were, he tells us, a rough, boisterous, lawless set, not wanting in mother-wit, but impatient of discipline and social restraints of any kind—as might, indeed, be expected from the children of their fathers. Dale Owen insisted that no corporal punishment should be permitted, and his account of how ultimately he succeeded in establishing perfect obedience by no other means than his own common sense and sheer goodwill shows him to have been a true son of his father.¹

The Duke of Saxe-Weimar naturally paid a visit to the schools. “I found Professor Neef,” he writes, “in the act of leading the boys of the school out to labour. Military exercises formed a part of the instruction of the children. I saw the boys divided into two ranks and parted into detachments, marching to labour. On the way they performed various wheelings and evolutions. All the boys and girls have a very healthy look, are cheerful and lively and by no means bashful. The boys labour in the field or the garden, and were now occupied with new fencing. The girls learned female employments; they are as little oppressed as the boys with labour and teaching; these happy and interesting little children were much more employed in making their youth pass as happily as possible. Madame Neef showed me their schoolhouse, in which she dwelt, and in which places for

¹ *Threading my Way*, pp. 246 9.

sleeping were arranged for the boys. Each slept upon a cot frame, on a straw bed." Later on, the Duke "went to the quondam church, a workshop for the boys who are intended for joiners and shoemakers. These boys sleep upon the floor above the church in cribs, three in a row, and thus have their sleeping place and place of instruction close together." There was also an infant school conducted by Madame Neef and Madame Frétegeot. A quaint picture of the girls' school is given by a former pupil, Mrs. Thrall, who died at New Harmony some years back. She wrote that "in summer the girls wore dresses of coarse linen with a coarse plaid costume for Sunday or for special occasions. In winter they wore heavy woollen dresses. At rising a detail of the girls was sent out to do the milking, and this milk, with mush cooked in large kettles, constituted the essential part of the morning meal, which the children were expected to finish in fifteen minutes. We had bread but once a week, on Saturday. I thought if I ever got out I would kill myself eating sugar and cake. We marched in military order, after breakfast, to Community House No. 2. I remember that there were blackboards covering one side of the schoolroom, and that we had wires, with balls on them, by which we learnt to count. We also had singing exercises by which we familiarised ourselves with lessons in various branches. At dinner we generally had soup, at supper mush and milk again. We went to bed at sundown in little bunks suspended in rows by cords from the ceiling. Sometimes one of the children at the end of the row would swing back her cradle, and when it collided on the return bound with the next bunk, it set the whole row bumping

together. This was a favourite diversion, and caused the teachers much distress. At regular intervals we used to be marched to the Community apothecary's shop, where a dose that tasted like sulphur was impartially dealt out to each pupil. Children regularly in the boarding school were not allowed to see their parents, except at rare intervals. I saw my father and mother twice in two years. We had a little song we used to sing :—

Number 2 pigs locked up in a pen
 When they get out—it's now and then ;
 When they get out they smell about ;
 For fear old Neef will find them out !”¹

Such harmony dwells in immortal souls, when nourished on a sufficiency of mush and milk !

From one Paul Brown, who came into the Community at the beginning of April, 1826, we hear of dissension and distrust as prevalent amongst the members.² By the constitution of February 5, it was provided that the real estate should be held in trust for the use of the Community, and that members leaving the Community should be entitled to receive only the money which they had actually brought into the common stock, and a proportionate part of the value of any real estate acquired by the Community during their membership. The measures by which the real estate was to be transferred from Owen to the Community are nowhere set forth in the *Gazette*. But Brown states that, apparently after the constitution had been accepted, the members were asked to sign a document binding themselves to the

¹ Quoted by Lockwood, *op. cit.*, pp. 194, 195.

² *Twelve months in New Harmony*. Cincinnati, 1827.

ultimate purchase of the estate as hereafter to be appraised, and that there was much dissatisfaction thereat. Ultimately, Brown tells us, Owen selected twenty-five men who were willing to take upon themselves the responsibility of signing a contract with himself and Maclure. These twenty-five were to co-opt others who should share the responsibility with them; besides these full members there were to be the conditional and probationary members.

Owen, according to Brown, was constantly inculcating on the people the necessity of thrift, "and knacks of saving and gaining money. Yet persons were spending their time in teaching music and dancing; profusions of musical instruments were provided, and great quantities of candles burnt at their balls. It is said he once told them in his preaching that 'they must be good misers.' A great part of the time the people were very much stinted in their allowance of coffee and tea, butter, milk, &c. Mr. Owen, constantly boarding at the tavern, where luxurious regale was copiously provided to sell to travelling men of the world and to loungers, drank rich coffee and tea."¹

Another subject of Brown's criticism was the minute and complicated system of accounts. Accounts were kept, he tells us, of every pennyworth that was consumed, and every member was credited with every hour's work done; and a number of intelligent persons were occupied in

¹ *Twelve months in New Harmony*, p. 25. In his speech at Philadelphia on June 27, 1827, Owen stated that whilst at New Harmony he tried the experiment of having only two meals a day—at 7 a.m. and 5 p.m., and that his "average expenses of living, for about five months, including eating and drinking, amounted to less than six cents (3*d.*) a day." (*New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. II., p 347.)

the "sterile and tasteless drudgery" of keeping these accounts, who might otherwise have been employed on useful and productive labour.

Brown's criticism here is obviously wide of the mark; for nothing could be more important in a new experiment of this kind than to keep the most minute and accurate account practicable of every item of expenditure, and of the disposal of every member's time. His remark, however, that "the children ran mad, in point of morals, from having heard the doctrine of no praise or blame, no reward or punishment, which went under the name of the new system," derives some confirmation from the account by Robert Dale Owen of the unruliness and want of discipline amongst the elder boys in the school. We shall see later that the same difficulties were encountered at Orbiston.

But taken as a whole Brown's strictures are unintelligent, and instructive only so far as they serve to show the spirit which prevailed amongst some of the baser-minded members of the little Community. Unfortunately, however, there can be no doubt that there were differences of view—not always perhaps acute—amongst the colonists; and that the new constitution did not for long work smoothly. In the course of the next twelve months there were several changes of constitution in the parent Community. Paul Brown describes two or three, and the editors of the *Gazette* hint at yet others;¹ and several daughter Communities were formed. Finally, in an editorial in the *Gazette* of March 28, 1827, written

¹ A. J. Macdonald, quoted by Noyes (*op. cit.*, pp. 35-40), enumerates seven successive constitutions for the parent Community. In this total are included the Preliminary Society and the constitution of February 5, 1826.

by Robert Dale Owen and his brother William,¹ we have an authoritative account of the state of affairs. The article is practically a confession that the great enterprise has failed for the time. "The experiment to ascertain whether a mixed and unassorted population could successfully govern their own affairs as a Community was a bold and a hazardous and, as we think, a premature one.

"Our own opinion is that Robert Owen ascribed too little influence to the early anti-social circumstances that had surrounded many of the quickly collected inhabitants of New Harmony before their arrival there, and too much to those circumstances which his experience might enable them to create round themselves in future." One form of government, they proceed, was tried after another, "until it appeared that the whole population, numerous as they were, were too various in their feelings and too dissimilar in their habits to unite and govern themselves harmoniously in one Community." They split therefore into three. Then two of these again united, and asked Owen with four other trustees to take charge of their affairs. Shortly, however, the trustees found that the reunited Society consumed more than it produced. "The deficiency of production appeared immediately attributable in part to carelessness in many members as regarded Community property; in part to their want of interest in the experiment itself—the only true incitement to Community industry; and these again were to be traced to a want of confidence in each other, not perhaps unfounded, and which was increased by the unequal industry and by the discordant variety of habits which existed among them." So the parent Community

¹ *Threading my Way*, p. 257. The editorial is anonymous.

was finally subdivided into independent occupations—each occupation managing its own affairs and making a small weekly contribution to the general expenses of the town. “New Harmony, therefore,” the editors continue, “is not now a Community but, as was originally intended, a central village out of and around which Communities have formed and may continue to form themselves.” For Owen offered land and pecuniary assistance to any who wished to form a community on the estate. At this time (March, 1827) there were, including the Education Society, four such daughter Communities, of which one, Feiba Peveli, had been in existence for about a year. Macluria had also flourished for a year, but had apparently dissolved itself. The Education Society, however, under the direction of William Maclure himself, still flourished, though the Indiana Legislature had recently rejected by a large majority a Bill for its incorporation.¹

At the time that the parent Community was dissolved, as we learn from an address by Robert Owen delivered on May 6, all those persons who did not at once join one of the daughter Communities were warned that they must henceforth either support themselves by their own industry, or leave New Harmony. Under these circumstances, Owen adds, “many families left New Harmony, with their feelings more or less hurt,” a statement which

¹ *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. II., p. 158. Maclure's advertisement for pupils appears later in this year in the *Gazette*. He desires a few pupils, not under twelve, to be bound until they come of age. The boys would be employed in school five hours a day, and seven hours on farm, garden, or in the workshops. The girls would be taught “housework, needlework, and such other useful knowledge as is suitable for their sex.”

is full of illumination for those who desire to know why New Harmony failed. But now, Owen adds, the exodus is happily over. "The Social System is now firmly established; its principles are daily becoming better understood," and there are already *eight* daughter Communities, exclusive of the Education Society, and more are projected. Owen feels an inexpressible delight in looking back upon the obstacles which have been overcome, and "in viewing the cheering prospects which are before us. The latter, although not exactly in the way I expected, far exceed the most sanguine anticipations I formed at the commencement of the experiments here, and induce a belief that nothing can prevent the rapid spread of the Social System over the United States."¹ Just three weeks later, on May 27, 1827, Owen delivered a valedictory address to the *ten* Social Colonies of Equality and Common Property forming on the New Harmony Estate—they have grown, it will be seen, in two months from four to ten.

In this address Owen explains that he would like to undertake the work of feeding, clothing and educating the children in the Community Schools without cost to the colonists; but he had already expended so much money on the scheme that he is doubtful if he will be able to defray the entire cost. He had left, however, 3,000 dollars for the purpose. On June 1, Owen left New Harmony: on the twenty-seventh of the same month he delivered an address at Philadelphia, and reached England on July 24, 1827.

After his departure the *New Harmony Gazette* is silent as to the progress of the ten Communities, the

¹ *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. II., p. 255.

last item being a brief notice of a harvest festival at Feiba Peveli on July 28, 1827, at which upwards of fifty persons sat down to an excellent supper.¹ The editor indeed seems intentionally to shun all reference to domestic concerns. We are told, however, that a Thespian Society had been formed at New Harmony, and gave their first dramatic performance—the *Poor Gentleman* and *Fortune's Frolic*—on February 23, 1828. The performance gave general satisfaction; and on the twenty-third of the following month two other comedies were produced.²

In the late autumn of 1827 Robert Owen returned to America, and delivered lectures in various cities throughout the Eastern States. On Sunday, April 13, 1828, we find him again addressing a public meeting of the inhabitants of New Harmony. The state of things which he found on his return had convinced even his optimism that the great social experiment had so far failed. He briefly recapitulates the history of the enterprise, and then characteristically proceeds to reconstruct a new edifice from the ruins of the old:

“I came here with a determination to try what could be effected in this new country to relieve my fellow-men from superstition and mental degradation, so that if successful the experiment might be an example which all might follow and by which all might benefit.

“I tried here a new course for which I was induced to hope that fifty years of political liberty had prepared the American population—that is, to govern themselves advantageously. I supplied land, houses and the use

¹ *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. II., p. 342.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. III., pp. 142, 150, 190.

of much capital . . . but experience proved that the attempt was premature to unite a number of strangers not previously educated for the purpose, who should carry on extensive operations for their common interest, and live together as a common family. I afterwards tried, before my last departure hence, what could be done by those who associated through their own choice and in small numbers; to these I gave leases of large tracts of good land for ten thousand years upon a nominal rent, and for moral conditions only . . . now upon my return I find that the habits of the individual system were so powerful that these leases have been, with a few exceptions, applied for individual purposes and individual gain, and in consequence they must return again into my hands.

“This last experiment has made it evident that families trained in the individual system, founded as it is upon superstition, have not acquired those moral qualities of forbearance and charity for each other which are necessary to promote full confidence and harmony among all the members, and without which Communities cannot exist.”

He then proceeded to refer to various breaches of the engagements entered into with him, and to conduct on the part of certain persons at variance with the principles of the Social System, especially the establishment of monopolies, and the carrying on of “petty stores and whiskey shops” on the competition system.

“My intention,” he proceeds, “now is to form such arrangements on the estate of Harmony as will enable those who desire to promote the practice of the Social System to live in separate families on the

individual system, and yet to unite their general labour, or to exchange labour for labour on the most beneficial terms for all, or to do both or neither as their feelings and apparent interests may influence them. While other arrangements shall be formed to enable them to have their children trained from infancy in a knowledge of the principles of human nature and of the laws which govern it. . . .

“By these measures I hope there will be brought around us by degrees an honest and industrious and also a well-educated population, with right feelings and views, who will earnestly endeavour to promote the happiness of each other, and unite in bringing up their children as one family with simple manners, temperate habits and useful knowledge, both in principle and practice.”¹

On Sunday, June 22, 1828, Robert Owen met the inhabitants of New Harmony to bid them farewell, and on the following Friday he left the Colony.²

¹ *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. III., pp. 204, 205.

² *Ibid.*, p. 287.

CHAPTER XIV

THE END OF NEW HARMONY

AFTER Owen's departure in June, 1828, we hear little more of the colony at New Harmony. The *New Harmony Gazette* still continued, indeed, under that name until October of that year, when it changed its title for *The New Harmony and Nashoba Gazette or Free Inquirer*. The new periodical was edited, as its predecessor had been for some twelve months, by R. Dale Owen and Frances Wright. The little Community soon lapsed into complete individualism, Owen and Maclure, the two landlords, selling or leasing in small lots such of the property as they did not retain in their own hands.¹ One of the daughter Communities, however, No. 3 (? Feiba Peveli), is reported to have continued as a Community under the terms of the original lease for some years. But eventually that too was dissolved and some of the property bought by two of the members for their private occupation.²

¹ A. J. Macdonald, quoted by Noyes, *History of American Socialisms*, pp. 41, 42.

² Dr. Schuach, quoted by Lockwood, *The New Harmony Communities*, p. 215. From a private letter written by Richard Owen in December, 1880 (a copy of which has been lent me by Professor Earl Barnes), I gather that the freehold of the land on which the Community stood was given by Owen to his son Richard; and that on the expiration of the lease, the Community having, it would seem, previously dissolved, Richard Owen sold part of the land to two of the members, retaining part for his own use.

The whole enterprise, culminating in the change to private ownership, entailed heavy loss to Owen. The exact nature of the financial transactions in connection with the original purchase of the site and buildings and the subsequent conduct of the enterprise—which was probably at no period self-supporting—remains obscure. From Owen's Philadelphia address¹ we learn that the sum paid for the real estate amounted to near 100,000 dollars,² and for the personal property 40,000 more—say £28,000 in all. It was the original intention that Maclure should contribute a like amount. It does not appear that he actually did so; but he certainly advanced large sums. Unfortunately the pecuniary arrangements between him and Owen were not apparently placed upon a sound business footing; and subsequent misunderstandings on Maclure's part led to a serious rupture. On April 30, 1827, Maclure issued an advertisement warning all concerned that he would not be responsible for any debt contracted by Owen in their joint names, and subsequently commenced legal proceedings against Owen to recover money alleged to be due. Eventually, however, the matter at issue was referred to arbitrators, from whose award it appears that it was Maclure who was indebted to Owen, to the amount of 5,000 dollars.³

In the winding up in 1827 and 1828 of the com-

¹ *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. II., p. 353. The address was delivered on June 27, 1827.

² Actually ninety-five thousand, as shown above, p. 289 (footnote).

³ The only account which we have of these transactions is Owen's own, given after the Philadelphia address referred to. But a full report appeared subsequently in the *New Harmony Gazette*, and as Maclure still continued to reside at New Harmony it may perhaps be presumed that if not substantially accurate it would have been contradicted.



THE GRANARY FORT AND GEORGE RAPP'S RESIDENCE HARMONY.

The residence was later occupied by the Owens.

munity affairs, Owen lost a large amount of property through unscrupulous speculators, who took advantage of his simplicity, and generosity. In particular, it is told of a man called Taylor, who was for some time in partnership with William Owen and Fauntleroy, that on the dissolution of the partnership he agreed to purchase from Robert Owen a large tract of land, with all that was on it, and that on the night before the agreement was actually signed he caused a large quantity of cattle and farming implements to be put upon the land, and so came into possession of them. Having got the land he built a distillery upon it.¹

Owen reserved some part of the land for himself and eventually made it over to one of his sons. His own loss over the whole experiment from the beginning amounted to over £40,000—more than four-fifths of his entire available capital at that time.²

Owen left not only his fortune but his family behind him in Indiana. His four sons—for the two younger sons, Richard and David Dale Owen had come over in 1828—remained in New Harmony as citizens of the United States,³ and ultimately won distinction in various fields. Robert Dale, as already said, continued to edit the *New Harmony Gazette* and

¹ Macdonald, quoted by Noyes, *op. cit.*, p. 48. See also *Threading my Way*, p. 258. The dissolution of partnership with William Owen and the cancelling of all agreements with Robert Owen is advertised in the *New Harmony Gazette* of October 1, 1828, p. 392.

² *Threading my Way*, p. 261.

³ In the Manchester Correspondence there is a Court Copy, with the official seal, of a declaration made by Robert Owen at a Circuit Court held at Palestine, State of Illinois, on May 9, 1825, in which he announced his intention of becoming a citizen of the United States. But the intention does not seem to have been fulfilled.

afterwards the *Free Inquirer*, in conjunction with Frances Wright. He returned to England for a time in the early thirties : the first volume of the *Crisis* (1832) bears on the title page the legend "Edited by Robert Owen and Robert Dale Owen." About this time also Robert Dale Owen published a pamphlet, *Moral Physiology*, in which he advocated the use of checks on conception. But his later life was spent as a citizen of the United States. In 1835 he became a Member of the Indiana State Legislature, and in 1843 he was elected to the Congress of the United States. As a Member of Congress he introduced the Bill providing for the founding of the Smithsonian Institution ; the plan of the actual building is also said to have been due to him and his brother David Dale. He was elected a member of the Indiana Constitutional Convention in 1850 and proved "beyond all comparison the most laborious, fertile and efficient member of that body. The law reforms and the provisions for woman's rights and free schools were especially his work, and leave upon our Statute books the ineffaceable mark of his father's inculcation, modified and strengthened by his own talent and observation." In effect, the constitution which he helped to frame provided for a uniform system of common schools, free to all, throughout the State. He later succeeded in passing State laws giving married women control of their property, and providing for greater freedom in divorce. In 1853 he was appointed U.S. Minister at Naples. Whilst there he became converted to Spiritualism, and his two books, *Footfalls on the Boundary of another World*, and *The Debateable land between this World and the Next*, remain two of the best

books ever written on the subject. That pernicious heresy never found a nobler or more persuasive advocate. His *Autobiography*, published in 1874, is marked by the same winning candour and simplicity. He died on June 24, 1877, his last days being unhappily clouded by slight mental derangement, brought on, it is said, by the shock of the exposure of a medium in whom he had placed full confidence.

The second brother, William, settled down at New Harmony, marrying there in 1837. He died in 1841 or 1842. The two younger sons, David Dale Owen and Richard Owen were at Fellenberg's School throughout the whole period of the Community experiment, and only arrived at New Harmony in January, 1828. David Dale Owen afterwards returned to Europe to pursue his scientific studies. In 1839 he was appointed United States Geologist and instructed to make a survey of the North-West, including what is now Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, etc. The headquarters of the United States Geological Survey continued at New Harmony until 1856, when they were transferred to the Smithsonian Institution. David Owen continued his work at geology until his death in 1860.¹

The youngest son, Richard Owen, on his arrival at New Harmony in his eighteenth year, found employment in teaching in the schools. Later for some years he cultivated the land left him by his father, and ran a steam flourmill. In 1848 he assisted his brother David in the geological survey referred to. Subsequently he became a Professor of Natural Science in the Nashville University.

¹ I take these particulars mostly from Lockwood's book, *The New Harmony Communities*, pp. 260-7.

On the death of David in 1860 he succeeded him as State Geologist. In the following year he accepted the lieutenant-colonelcy of the 15th Indiana Volunteers, and for the next two or three years was actively engaged in the war. In the spring of 1862 he and his regiment were taken prisoners, and the Confederate general took the opportunity of publicly thanking Owen for his kindness to some four thousand Southern prisoners who had been placed in his charge the previous winter. After the war the remainder of Richard Owen's life was given to his scientific pursuits. He published numerous reports and monographs, chiefly on geological subjects, terrestrial magnetism, etc., and also a few addresses on education and ethical questions. He died at New Harmony on March 24, 1890, in his eighty-first year.¹

After the death of her mother and sisters, Owen's only surviving daughter, Jane, married Fauntleroy, one of the men at one time associated in partnership with Owen, and settled at New Harmony.

William Maclure remained at New Harmony for a short time after the collapse of the Community experiment, and continued to carry on the schools; and when his health compelled him to leave New Harmony, he did not sever his connection with the place. In 1828 he started a periodical called the *Disseminator*, "containing hints to the youth of the United States; edited, printed, and published by the pupils of the School of Industry."² In 1831 he brought out a bulky octavo volume of "Opinions on various subjects, dedicated to the Industrious Producers." The book was published at New

¹ From a Memoir in the *American Geologist* for September, 1890.

² *Lockwood*, p. 252.

Harmony and printed at the School Press, and the printing is by no means badly done.¹ Shortly before his death he conveyed a sufficient sum of money to found the Working Men's Institute and Public Library at New Harmony, which still stands as a monument to his memory.

Thomas Say also remained on in New Harmony, acting as Maclure's agent and assistant. As already stated, he there produced his treatises on American entomology and conchology. The latter book was actually printed at New Harmony.

Thus, though Owen's great experiment failed, a quite unlooked-for success in another direction rewarded his efforts. New Harmony remained for more than a generation the chief scientific and educational centre in the West; and the influences which radiated from it have made themselves felt in many directions in the social and political structure of the country. Even to this day the impress of Robert Owen is clearly marked upon the town which he founded. New Harmony is not as other towns of the Western States. It is a town with a history. The dust of those broken hopes and ideals forms the soil in which the life of the present is rooted. The name of Owen is still borne in the town by several prominent citizens, descendants of the great Socialist. The town is proud in the possession of a public library—the librarian himself a grandson of one of the original colonists—of some fifteen thousand volumes, many of them scarce and valuable works.

New Harmony and its daughter Communities were by no means the only experiments in practical Socialism

¹ There is a copy in the British Museum.

at this period. We have already seen that there existed in New York some years before Owen's visit in the autumn of 1824 a Society for founding Communities. Owen's *New View of Society* had no doubt attracted attention in America long before his advent. Moreover there were examples in the Shaker Communities, and in Harmony itself, to prove the practicability of association on the principles of common property and equality. The lectures delivered by Owen, therefore, at his several visits in the large towns, found a ready hearing; and several attempts were made in the years 1825-8 to carry out his views in practice. The colony of Nashoba was apparently in contemplation even before Owen's visit in 1824. Frances Wright, its founder, had the cause of negro emancipation much at heart, and her experiment was designed to educate the slave to live in freedom and equality with his white brother. She visited the Rappites both at Harmony and Economy, studied their methods, and finally in the autumn of 1825 purchased two thousand acres of land in West Tennessee, and purchased also several families of slaves, whom she settled on the land, there to work out their freedom. Her own illness hampered the progress of the scheme, and ultimately in December, 1826, she made over the estate to a body of trustees, amongst whom were Lafayette, Robert Owen, W. Maclure, Robert Dale Owen and George Flower, to hold in perpetual trust for the negro race. The experiment lasted for some years. It failed ultimately from much the same causes as brought failure on New Harmony.¹

One of the most notable of the experiments which

¹ Noyes, pp. 66-72. *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. II., p. 164; Vol. III., pp. 124, 132, 172, etc.

owed its inspiration directly to Owen was the Community of Yellow Springs, Ohio. On his way to purchase Harmony, Owen delivered a lecture on the new system in Cincinnati and created a profound impression. Amongst those who were most affected was a Swedenborgian minister named Roe; and he with members of his congregation and others soon organised a Community and purchased 800 acres of land, for 8,000 dollars. The Community started in July, 1825. In September we read that nearly 100 hands were already at work; the number was to be limited to 2,000. The members expected soon to have trades of all kinds and factories at work. In fact the Community is said to have lasted for a few months only.¹

Other Communities were started in the course of these four years, 1825-8, at Franklin, New York; ² Kendal, Ohio; ³ Forrest-ville, Indiana; ⁴ Coxsackie, New York; ⁵ Haverstraw, New York; Blue Spring, Indiana. We hear also of a "Community of United Germans" at Teutonia, Ohio. But this, though a democratic Community recognizing the principle of common property, had a religious basis.⁶

By 1828 it is probable that all these Communities had come to an end. But Owen's teaching, and the

¹ Noyes, pp. 59-65. *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. I., p. 71. Noyes's authority is a newspaper extract, without title or date, found amongst Macdonald's papers. But some particulars of the Community are given in the *New Harmony Gazette*.

² *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. I., p. 287.

³ *Id.*, Vol. I., p. 349; Vol. II., p. 81; Vol. III., p. 141.

⁴ *Id.*, Vol. III., pp. 34, 141.

⁵ *Id.*, Vol. III., p. 141. Haverstraw and Blue Spring, so far as I can find, are not mentioned in the *Gazette*; but some account of them is given in Macdonald's MSS. quoted by Noyes.

⁶ *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. III., p. 81.

demonstration of his principles and his ideals afforded by the New Harmony experiment, had an influence of a more permanent character. There can be little doubt that the Fourierite enthusiasm of 1840-50 onwards, which produced Brook Farm and innumerable "Phalanxes," owed much to Owen. They reaped a harvest of which he had sown the seed. The later experiments were, indeed, in many instances far more longlived than any Communities of the Owenite period. Brook Farm lasted for five years, the Wisconsin Phalanx for six, the North American Phalanx for twelve; and several minor Fourierite Communities had an existence of two or three years. The secret of their relative success reveals one of the main causes of the failure of New Harmony and the other experiments of the earlier period. All the Owenite Communities, as we have seen, were theoretically conducted on the principle of absolute equality and community of property. No man was to be esteemed before or after another; and no man's labour was to be rewarded more or less than another's. All were to work as they could, and to receive a like share in the common product. In the Fourierite Communities differences of status and accommodation were recognised. Each member contributed a certain sum to the common stock, and paid for what accommodation he required. Further, each received a reward proportionate to the amount and value of his labour.

The causes contributing to the failure of New Harmony were many and various. The first mistake was made when the general invitation was issued to the industrious and well-disposed of all nations to join. The new colony was indeed fortunate in that so many

of those who joined it did fairly answer to this description. But there were some sharpers, some unsuccessful speculators, many amiable visionaries; and not a few, apparently, whose only proof of fitness for the world to be was their failure in the world that is. Again, if all the colonists had been as industrious and as honest as Owen himself, they were still too heterogeneous to fuse into a Community of Equality. Differences of sect, race and social rank, as we have seen, constantly stood in the way. Once more, the Rappites, whose example and guidance Owen had hoped for at the starting of the colony, left before it had fairly begun. Owen himself was not on the spot to direct affairs throughout the first year; and there was no one capable of taking his place. But if the colonists had been judiciously selected, and if Owen had guided the enterprise from the commencement, the inevitable catastrophe would only have come a little later. Even the most carefully organised of the Fourierite Communities, which did provide some incentive to effort, struggled on for a few years at most.

Under Owen's scheme there was to be no scourge for idleness, and no reward for industry; no outlet whatever for ambition. Such a system might work in a golden age, when mankind, finding all their material wants satisfied, should have realised the universal human brotherhood, and left themselves free to turn their thoughts to the things of the spirit. But in a society which had found that the good things of the world are not enough to go round, and whose members had been trained each to snatch as large a share as he could, the great dream was too great. In fact, the only Communist

Societies which have attained any high degree of material prosperity and have retained it for any length of time, have been precisely those which did not look for material success, to wit, those whose members had been unified by a common religious enthusiasm. They have also for the most part consisted of persons of the same social rank, and the same nationality; their union has generally been consolidated by emigration, which has kept them strangers in a strange land; they have most of them been governed by a religious oligarchy or monarchy. And lastly, they have escaped their fair share of the world's burdens by an enforced celibacy.

A member of the Oneida Community, one of the most successful communities which was ever founded on a professedly democratic basis, and did not adopt celibacy, sums up the case against New Harmony in one pregnant sentence. "There are only two ways," said he, "of governing a Community; it must be done either by law or by grace. Owen abolished law, but did not establish grace."¹

Owen bade farewell to New Harmony, as described in the preceding chapter, at the end of June, 1828, and returned to England; but only to embark on a new attempt at Community-building. Owen's own account of this new venture is that he was solicited by Rocafuertes, the Mexican Minister in London, to apply to the Mexican Government for the grant of Cohahuila and Texas, then a province of the Mexican Republic, to form the stage of a social experiment on a colossal

¹ Noyes, *op. cit.*, p. 54. The constitution of Oneida was never really democratic during the lifetime of Noyes, its founder; and though not adopting celibacy, the members took measures to regulate the growth of population.

scale.¹ But from the Manchester Correspondence it would appear that the idea was first started in his mind by a letter from one Ben. R. Milan, who wrote on August 30 of this year from Louisiana, stating that he and General Wavell had received grants from the Government of Mexico of land in Texas, and were prepared to offer valuable allotments on suitable terms, if Owen would care to consider the proposal. Owen had thus it would seem already made up his mind to colonise Texas, before he approached the Mexican Minister, who for his part did his best to discountenance the project, as the following letter will show.

"IVY LODGE, FULHAM,
17th October, 1828.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"The more I reflect upon your plan more obstacles I meet in its execution, and greater is my apprehension that you will not succeed in Texas; the interest I take in your concerns and the value I set on your time always applied to useful purposes stimulates me to tell you my candid opinion on this interesting subject. I am afraid you will be completely disappointed in your expectations, and in carrying into effect your benevolent scheme of moral reform in such a country as Texas, and if I dare suggest to you the idea of giving up your trip to Mexico by the next Packet, I would do it, guided by a feeling of respect I have for you.

¹ *London Investigator*, Vol. III., p. 232. Owen wrote a brief sketch of his life which appeared simultaneously in the *London Investigator* (a secularist journal edited by Robert Cooper) and the *Millennial Gazette* during the year 1856.

“I have sent your memorial to the Mexican Government and have recommended it, but I fear it will not meet the sanction of the Ministry, at all events I think it would be more advisable to wait for an answer. Hoping you will excuse my frankness, proceeding from the interest I take in your welfare, I have the honour to be,

“My dear Sir,

“Your most obedient servant,

“VIC^{TE} ROCAFUERTEZ.”

Owen received the letter in New Lanark and replied to it on October 31, in characteristic fashion—
 “. . . The subject of your letter in reference to Texas is in unison with my views from the time it was first mentioned to me. I knew many formidable difficulties would present themselves as I proceeded in the negotiation, but I have always had the prejudices of mankind to overcome, and my success has given me confidence to meet them openly and fairly under every form in which they may arise. And the republic of Mexico with the Governments south, north and east, seem to me at this period to be in a state peculiarly favourable to be beneficially acted upon to an extent that few unacquainted with the real state of the human mind in Europe and America can readily imagine. The world is, as it appears to me, full ripe for a great moral change, and it may be, I think, commenced the most advantageously in the New World ; the Mexican Republic presents perhaps at the moment the best point at which to begin new and mighty operations”

Towards the end of November Owen set sail for Vera Cruz. The ship touched first at San Domingo, and afterwards at Jamaica. At Kingston Owen renewed some old friendships, amongst others with Admiral Fleming, then in command at the West Indies, and made many new ones—for throughout his life he had the power of attracting all men to him. He took the opportunity of studying the condition of the slave population in Jamaica. This is his account of his observations :

“ The slaves whom I saw in the island of Jamaica are better dressed, more independent in their look, person and manner, and are greatly more free from corroding care and anxiety than a large portion of the working-classes in England, Scotland and Ireland. What the condition of these slaves was in former times I know not. But I request with all the earnestness such a subject demands, that our good religious people in England will not attempt to disturb these slaves in the happiness and independence which they enjoy in their present condition. For while they are under humane masters—and almost all slave proprietors are now humane, for they know it to be to their interest to be so—the West Indian ‘ slave ’ as he is called, is greatly more comfortable and happy than the British or Irish operative manufacturer or day-labourer. These slaves are secure in sufficiency for the enjoyment of all the animal wants, and they are, fortunately for themselves, in the present stage of society too ignorant to desire more. If their present condition should not be interfered with by the abolitionists on the one hand, and the religionists on the other, these slaves cannot fail to be generally

the happiest members of society for many years to come—until knowledge can be no longer kept from them.”¹

The extract is not more instructive on the condition of the slaves in pre-abolition days, than on the writer's views of life and on his patriarchal attitude towards the working-classes.

From Jamaica Owen proceeded to Vera Cruz. Mexico was at that time in revolution, Santa Anna, at the head of the army, having recently installed in office a new President, his friend Guerrero. On his way up from the coast Owen fell in with Santa Anna and the revolutionary forces. He was given safe conduct, however, after having made an engagement with Santa Anna to meet him on his return journey, in order to make to him an important communication. On his arrival in the city of Mexico Owen called upon the President of the Republic and other influential personages. His application for the provinces of Texas and Cohahuila could not, he was told, be complied with, but he was promised full jurisdiction over a strip of neutral territory 150 miles in breadth, which ran from sea to sea, forming a barrier between Mexico and the United States. The fulfilment of the promise was made conditional, however, on the Mexican Congress passing an Act to establish freedom of religious belief over the Republic. Later, Owen learnt that the measure was thrown out, and his great scheme accordingly came to nought.²

¹ *British Co-operator* (1830), pp. 93, 94.

² It must be remembered that we have only Owen's own version of what took place on the journey to Mexico. That he did actually receive such a promise—even a conditional promise—as he states seems scarcely probable.

After a stay of a few weeks only in the interior Owen made his way back to the coast. On the return journey, in accordance with the arrangement made, he called upon Santa Anna, and proposed to discuss with him the principles of the New System. Santa Anna, we are told, readily assented, and on Owen's attending at an early hour on the following morning he found the general and three of his officers prepared to listen. Owen had drawn out a summary of his doctrines in twelve sections, probably the twelve fundamental laws which figured so prominently in the Cincinnati debate as described at the end of this chapter. These twelve sections he read and expounded to his audience one by one. After an animated discussion we learn that all the officers were converted to the new views, and Santa Anna in particular was so enthusiastic that he expressed a wish that the principles could be translated into Spanish and circulated throughout the Republic. Further, he promised to aid Owen at all times to the full extent of his powers.

On reaching Vera Cruz again Owen was met, in accordance with a promise given by Admiral Fleming, by H.M.S. *Druid* and H.M.S. *Fairy* and was conveyed by the latter, a ten-gun brig, to New Orleans, whence he travelled to Cincinnati, reaching that town early in April, 1829, in time to fulfil an engagement made a twelvemonth before. In January, 1828, after giving a course of lectures in New Orleans, Owen had issued a public challenge to the clergy of the United States inviting any of them to meet him in friendly discussion.

The propositions which Owen had professed himself

ready to defend were “(1) That all the religions of the world have been founded on the ignorance of mankind ; (2) that they are directly opposed to the never-changing laws of our nature ; (3) that they have been and are the real cause of vice, dissension and misery of every description ; (4) that they are now the only real bar to the formation of a society of virtue, of intelligence, of charity in the most extended sense, and of sincerity and kindness among the whole human family ; and (5) that they can be no longer maintained except through the ignorance of the mass of the people, and the tyranny of the few over the mass.”¹

A Universalist minister, the Rev. Alexander Campbell, of Bethany, Virginia, took up the challenge.

The discussion actually began on Monday, April 13, 1829, and continued day by day, Sunday excepted, until the afternoon of Tuesday the 21st—eight days in all. The proceedings began at 9 a.m. each day and lasted until noon, and were resumed at 3 p.m. each afternoon. Each disputant spoke alternately ; but Campbell on one occasion claimed to have spoken for twelve consecutive hours. The audience who attended this strenuous entertainment is said to have numbered about a thousand persons.

In October, 1828, a letter from Owen had appeared in the *London Times*, stating that “the object of the meeting between the clergy and myself in April next in the city of Cincinnati, in the United States, is not to discuss the truth or falsehood of the Christian religion, as stated in the *Scotsman*, but to ascertain the errors in

¹ *Debate on the Evidences of Christianity, etc., between Robert Owen and Alexander Campbell*, London, 1839, p. 30.

all religions which prevent them from being efficacious in practice, and to bring out all that is really valuable in each, leaving out their errors, and thus to form from them collectively a religion wholly true and consistent, that it may become universal, and be acted upon consistently by all."

No doubt in writing this letter Owen thought that he had correctly interpreted Mr. Campbell's aims as well as his own, just as he appears to have thought that he had correctly represented the attitude of Rocafuerte to the Mexican project. In fact Owen was at all times incapable of seeing a point of view differing from his own, or even of conceiving the possibility of such a different view, except as the result of ignorance or blindness. But naturally the matter did not present itself in the same light to Mr. Campbell. Even when directly challenged by the latter, however, Owen was unable to recognise that his letter to the *London Times* was not a fair statement of his original proposal.¹ With such a beginning, it could hardly be expected that the discussion should lead to any common understanding. Owen's share in the proceedings throughout the entire eight days consisted of long expositions of his system, the twelve fundamental laws of human nature, the natural code of law which should obtain in a perfect society; the arrangements for the organisation and government of such a society, and so on. The germs of all the doctrines which he developed later in the *Book of the New Moral World*, the *Lectures on Marriage* and other works are to be found here. But it will be more convenient to consider them in the

¹ *Debate on the Evidences of Christianity*, pp. 30, 35.

more systematic form in which they were put before the world later on.¹

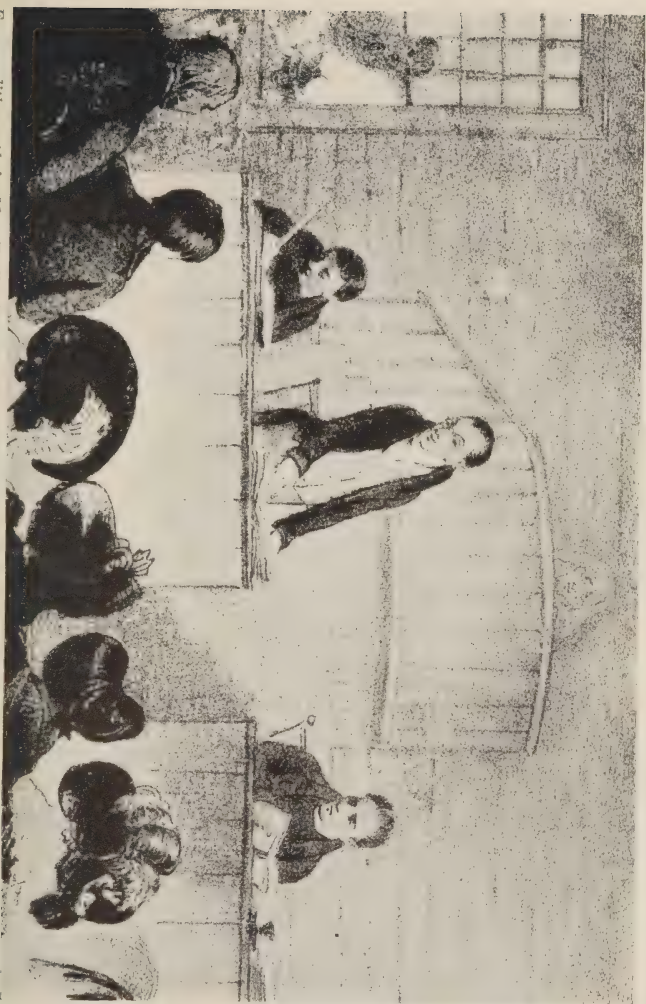
Campbell's discourse consisted in the main of a learned and occasionally eloquent apology for Christianity. But he took occasion to assail Owen's position, and to point out difficulties and inconsistencies in his argument. Owen was unapt at defence; and Campbell's attacks remained for the most part unanswered.

An English lady, Mrs. Trollope, who was present at the debate, gives an account of the proceedings, from which the following extracts are taken :

“When I recollect its object, and the uncompromising manner in which the orator stated his mature conviction that the whole history of the Church mission was a fraud, and its sacred origin a fable, I cannot but wonder that it was so listened to; yet at the time I felt no such wonder. Never did anyone practise the *suaviter in modo* with more powerful effect than Mr. Owen. The gentle tone of his voice, his mild, sometimes playful, but never ironical, manner, the absence of every vehement or harsh expression, the affectionate interest expressed for ‘the whole human family,’ the air of candour with which he expressed his wish to be convinced he was wrong, if he indeed were so; his kind smile, the mild expression of his eyes—in short, his whole manner disarmed zeal, and produced a degree of tolerance that those who did not hear him would hardly believe possible. . . .

“From this time Mr. Owen entrenched himself behind his twelve laws, and Mr. Campbell, with equal gravity, confined himself to bringing forward the most

See below, Chapter XX.



From a lithograph in Mrs. Trollope's "Domestic Manners of the Americans, 1832."

THE DEBATE BETWEEN OWEN AND CAMPBELL.

elaborate theological authorities in evidence of the truth of revealed religion. Neither appeared to me to answer the other, but to confine themselves to the utterance of what they had uppermost in their own minds when the discussion began.”¹

From Cincinnati Owen went to Washington, where he had interviews with Van Buren, the Secretary of State, and with the President, Andrew Jackson. Owen tells us that he discussed fully with these two gentlemen the causes of disagreement then existing between the United States and Great Britain, the nature of the settlement which they were prepared to accept, and received assurances of their sincere desire for friendly relations with this country. He was given letters to the United States Minister in England, to be presented after an interview with Lord Aberdeen.

On his return to England, Owen at once sought and obtained an interview with Lord Aberdeen :—

“I explained fully to him what I had done to prepare for a cordial reconciliation with the United States, and what I had promised on the part of our Government. He promptly said, ‘Mr. Owen, I highly approve of the policy which you recommend, and of all you have done. If the American Government will meet us half way, we will meet it in the same spirit.’ I said, ‘I have instructions here to the United States Minister from his Government, if I found you willing, to enter at once in this spirit to settle by immediate negotiations all existing differences.’ Lord Aberdeen said, ‘I am quite ready to meet Mr. McLane on these conditions.’”

¹ Quoted in the *Co-operative News*, August 6, 1904, from *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, 2 vols., 1832.

Owen accordingly communicated the message to Mr. McLane, a meeting with Lord Aberdeen was arranged, and all differences between the two countries were, Owen tells us, amicably settled ; until some years later the Oregon dispute again gave occasion for his friendly intervention.¹

¹ *London Investigator*, Vol. III., p. 247. For the Oregon question and Owen's share in it, see below Chapter xxiii. Again the reader should be reminded that we have only Owen's own version of these incidents.

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Robert Owen

From an engraving by Fryall after the picture by W.H. Brooke, A.R.H.S. 1836

ROBERT OWEN

CHAPTER XV

ORBISTON

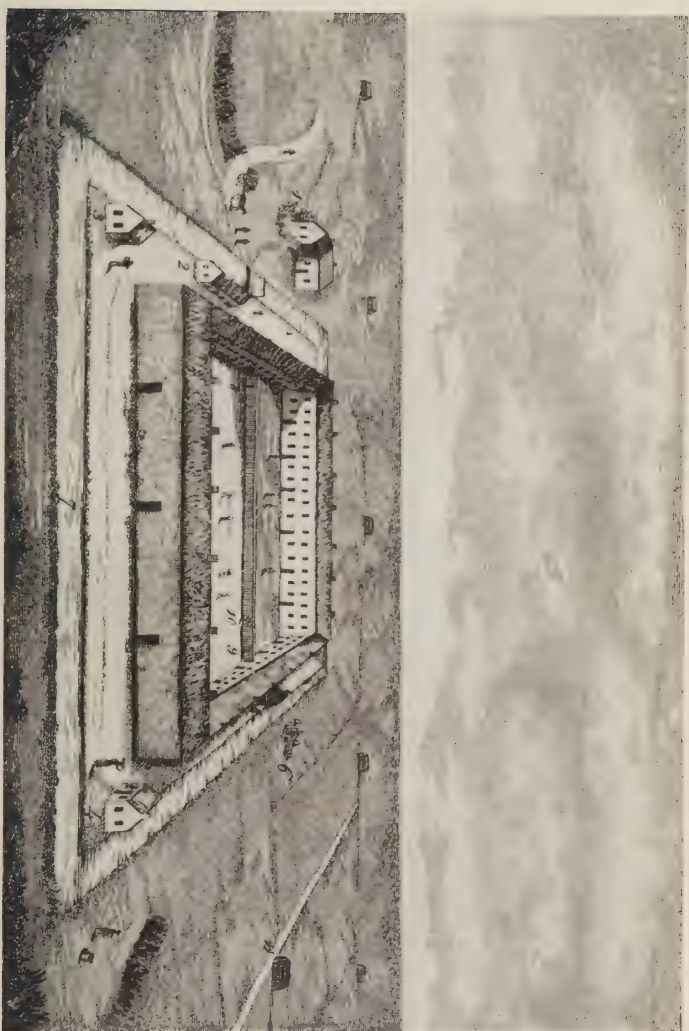
IN narrating the story of New Harmony and the Mexican and Cincinnati episodes we have, in order to follow Owen's personal history, somewhat anticipated the course of events in this country. For two or three years after the publication of the Report to the County of Lanark, Owen's attention appears to have been fully occupied with the abortive scheme of Motherwell, with the proceedings of the British and Foreign Philanthropic Society, with his Irish tour, and later with the concerns of New Harmony. With the effect produced by his teaching upon the larger world outside the committee presided over by the Duke of Kent he does not appear to have concerned himself: his trust was still placed in princes. Nevertheless in the decade 1820-30 many attempts were made in this country to carry into effect Owen's scheme for a Co-operative Community: these scattered efforts ultimately merging into a popular movement which swept through the country, and has left permanent traces on the organisation of industry even to the present day. The first signs that Owen's propaganda had

really penetrated beyond the small group of wealthy men to whom his preaching was in the first instance addressed made themselves manifest at the beginning of 1821.¹

In January of that year appeared *The Economist*, "a periodical paper," so runs the sub-title, "explanatory of the new system of Society projected by Robert Owen, Esq., and of a plan of association for improving the condition of the working classes during their continuance in their present employments." The editor of the *Economist* was, it will be seen, generally in agreement with Owen's views, though he takes occasion to explain that he does not give complete adhesion to all his master's utterances; and in particular, being himself a Christian, he dissents strongly from Owen's religious opinions.²

¹ In 1818 there was founded at Frederik's Oord in Holland the first of a series of Labour Colonies for providing work for the unemployed. Owen himself repeatedly, in the course of his later life, claimed that the foundation of these Dutch colonies was directly due to his teaching; and his claim has been endorsed by Holyoake and others. I cannot find any justification for the claim. In most of the contemporary references which I have come across to these colonies, no mention is made of Owen (see especially *Quarterly Review*, November, 1829). Moreover, though the Dutch scheme had a general resemblance to Owen's, and in one of the colonies at least the residents were housed in a quadrangle, the aim and methods diverged widely: the Dutch scheme was individualistic. (See Porter, *Progress of the Nation* (1851), p. 116; also *An Account of the Poor Colonies of Holland*. Edinburgh, 1828). The writer, however, of the article "Owen" in Palgrave's *Dictionary of Political Economy* favours Owen's claim to have had a share in initiating these Dutch Labour Colonies, and refers to an article in Leigh Hunt's *Examiner* of April 25, 1819, which endorses the claim.

² See editorial signed "Economist," Vol. I., p. 101. The editor and proprietor was one G. Mudie, at that time also editor of the *Sun*. Apparently in his advocacy of Christianity he was guided partly by policy, for in January, 1823, he writes to Owen, "I have been for a long time completely satisfied of the utter falsehood of all religion. . . . I still think it premature, however, to attack it through the medium of the Press" (letter of January 3, 1823, Manchester Collection).



A VIEW OF THE OMMERSCHANS AGRICULTURAL WORKHOUSE, HOLLAND.

See note on opposite page.

The pages of the *Economist* are devoted to general discussions of Owen's plans, and to chronicling the history of what is now beginning to take shape as a popular movement: and it is apparent that its readers for the most part belonged to the industrious classes, as Owen himself would have called them.

We hear a good deal in its pages of the project started by Mr. Hamilton of Dalzell, for founding a Community at Motherwell: but there are also notices of Co-operative, that is, generally, Owenite Societies forming or about to be formed. Thus amongst the artificers at Plymouth Docks,¹ and at Newcastle under the auspices of the Society of Friends,² Associations had been formed for the wholesale purchase and distribution of provisions—what we should now call, in fact, Co-operative Stores. At Edinburgh a Society had been formed on a somewhat wider basis, under the direction of Abram Combe. It chose the name of the *Practical* Society; and its first object was to provide good education for the children of the members, by carrying out Owen's principles as exemplified at New Lanark.³ We have also a brief reference to a Society of Christian Morality recently founded in Paris, which is said by the editor to have been inspired by Owenite principles.⁴

But the most important social experiment chronicled by the *Economist* is that of the "Co-operative and Economical Society." The periodical, indeed, seems

¹ Vol. II., p. 118.

² Vol. I., p. 268.

³ Vol. II., pp. 336, 345.

⁴ Vol. II., p. 381. There is no reference to Owen in the prospectus, and the assertion of Christian Morality in the title makes the alleged parentage at least doubtful.

to have originated with this Society, which ultimately took over the publication, until the final collapse.

On January 22, 1821, six days before the appearance of the *Economist*, a general meeting was held, consisting of printers and a number of outsiders who had been invited to attend, at which the Co-operative and Economical Society was formed. Its "ultimate object"—to quote the constitution¹—was "to establish a village of unity and mutual co-operation combining agriculture, manufactures and trades, upon the plan projected by Robert Owen of New Lanark." As a first step towards the realisation of the project, the Society proposed to secure suitable buildings—if possible, a whole street or square—somewhere in the London suburbs, in which the members might enjoy all the advantages of co-operation in household expenses and the care of their children, whilst still pursuing their ordinary occupations in the world outside. The scheme included the provision of a fund for those sick or out of employment; and Rule X. of the Constitution provided that "on the decease of a member his widow and children become members of the Society, without the payment of admission monies."²

The projectors estimated that by living together under a common roof, buying their own provisions, baking their own bread, brewing their own beer, and making their own boots and clothes, a Society of two hundred and fifty families would effect a saving of about £7,780 a year.³ Pending the issue of a search for

¹ Reprinted in the *Economist*, 1821, Vol. I., p. 203.

² *Ibid.*, p. 207.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

suitable dwellings, it was resolved to commence at once the purchase of provisions wholesale, to be retailed to the members at 5 per cent. above cost price, so as to cover expenses.¹ This arrangement appears to have gone on for some months, with great advantage to the members, who were thus enabled to save about 30 per cent. in the cost of provisions. Finally, in the *Economist* of November 17, 1821, we read that the Society has actually taken several houses at the corner of Guildford Street East, Bagnigge Wells Road, Spa Fields, and that two or three families have already gone into residence. In one house there was a large room to be used as a dining and committee room, which would, it is thought, hold one hundred persons.

It was decided, after some discussion, not to adopt a purely communistic basis, *i.e.* not to pool the income of the various families. The present members appear to have been willing to take this step; but it was thought that the adoption of such a measure might deter others from joining. So a fixed charge for maintenance, to include rent, food, washing, and the education of the children, was decided upon. A single man, or a married couple—for the wife, it was held, would repay by her labour the cost of her subsistence—were to pay 14s. 5d. a week, and a small additional sum for each child, so that a man, wife and five children would pay 22s. 6d. The women would undertake all the domestic work, and those women who could be spared, together with the elder children, would accept paid work outside the Society, their wages being thrown into a common fund which would serve for the education of the children, and for

¹ *Economist*, Vol. I., p. 234.

the advancement of the communal life. When the children were capable of working five or six hours daily, it was considered that they were paying for their maintenance, and their parents were to be relieved of all expense on their account. Until that time the children were to be a common charge on the Community, and their education its first duty. They were to be duly instructed, it is to be noted, in the principles of Christianity.

The members of the Community were to have a common kitchen, to breakfast and dine in one large room at a common table; to have public rooms for reading and music; common nurseries and dormitories for the children; and generally, all the domestic arrangements were to be worked in combination.

The Society forthwith issued a circular, addressed to the neighbouring nobility and gentry, announcing that they were prepared to execute orders in carving and gilding, boots and shoes, clothes, millinery, umbrellas, hardware, including stoves and kettles, cutlery, painting on velvet, transparent landscape window-blinds, bookbinding, and provisions. They hoped soon to open a school, to which children from the outside would be admitted at a small charge. A laboratory would also be fitted up on the premises for dispensing medicines: periodical visits had been arranged for from a medical man; and it was hoped that a useful register would be kept, including vital statistics of all kinds.

At the end of the first week we learn, from a "Minute of the congregated Families," that the cost of living, in comfort and abundance, had proved to be much less than the contribution exacted from the members.

One of the most notable arrangements of the Co-operative and Economical Society was the institution of monitors. Each member was enjoined to choose a monitor from his fellow-members, and as no monitor might have more than one client, it followed that each member acted as monitor to some other and was himself subject to admonition in turn. The monitor's duty was "to notice to his Appointer such errors of conduct, temper and language as he might from time to time observe, and particularly to admonish him of any fault in his behaviour to all or any of his co-associates, from which danger to the general harmony and mutual esteem and goodwill of the families might be apprehended."¹ If any complaint was made of the conduct of any member, it was the duty of the monitor to investigate and, if needed, to administer reproof. It was expressly provided that no monitor should exercise a vexatious interference, and that no member should seek to evade judgment by retorting a *tu quoque* on his judge.

A scheme of this kind, if patiently and loyally carried out, would, no doubt, do much to remove the inevitable daily occasions for friction in a society of this kind; and it is noteworthy that a similar device has been employed in other communist societies. The Shakers sought the same end by the practice of confession. Noyes in the Oneida Community instituted "criticism"—a far more severe ordeal than the private admonitions of a monitor. For the person undergoing "criticism" at Oneida was set in public in the midst of his friends and neighbours, who were enjoined to use the utmost frankness in telling him of his faults. Nevertheless the

¹ *Economist*, Vol. II., p. 379 *et seq.*

system is reported to have worked well and to have achieved its end.¹

Of the working of the monitorial system at Spa Fields we have no record; for a few weeks after its institution the *Economist* came to an end,² and with it all records of the Society ceased.³ It appears, however, from Mudie's letters, already quoted, that the Society continued to occupy the same premises, though probably no longer as a Community, for about a year longer. He writes (letter of August 25, 1848): "Had a few, or perhaps only one more influential man joined the congregated Society in Spafields, its success would have been assured. During two years while I was chief editor of the *Sun*, I and my family lived there in perfect harmony with twenty-one families of the working classes of London—too small a number to be able to furnish any successful example. Even I was compelled by the proprietors of the *Sun* to give up my residence with the Society, or to forfeit my situation as their editor. I therefore left it, and the congregated members shortly afterwards dispersed." From a letter written from Guildford Street in January, 1823, it appears that Mudie was still carrying on an active propaganda on the system, and continually engaged political economists in debate; but nothing is said about the Society.

Mudie afterwards threw up his post on the *Sun* and went to Orbiston, embarking all his capital—about £1,000—in that ill-fated venture. He quarrelled, however, as he

¹ See *The Communistic Societies of the United States* (Nordhoff), p. 289.

² The last number, appearing *longo intervallo*, is dated March 9, 1822.

³ Southey—who gives a sympathetic account of the Society in his *Colloquies*, Vol. I., p. 132 *seqq.*—attributes its failure to the want of the necessary funds for carrying on so extensive a scheme.

tells us, with Combe's dictatorial pretensions, and was ultimately thrown upon the world wholly destitute of means.

With the collapse of the London Co-operative and Economical Society the popular movement seems to have received a severe set back, and we hear no more of it for the next two or three years. In the meantime, however, Owen's public meetings continued, and he and his wealthy sympathisers continued their efforts to induce the public to subscribe a sum sufficient to buy land and erect substantial buildings, to the end that the industrious, or even the non-industrious, poor might enter in and live in peace and plenty.

We have traced in previous chapters the efforts in this direction made by successive groups of philanthropic persons ; and we have seen how ultimately Owen himself, disappointed at the slow progress made in this country, found a theatre for his grand experiment in the New World across the Atlantic. The scheme for a community at Motherwell collapsed with the withdrawal of Owen's support. But the project of founding a village of co-operation was by no means abandoned, and a local habitation was ultimately found within a mile of the spot originally suggested by Hamilton of Dalzell. In its later shape the project was mainly due to the initiation of one Abram Combe ; but the site chosen was also on Hamilton's estate, and he throughout co-operated with Combe in the enterprise, embarking all his fortune in it.¹

¹ From letters in the Manchester Collection, it appears that in the early spring of 1825 Hamilton wrote to Owen, then in America, that he would like to re-purchase the Motherwell Estate. Eventually it was offered to him at the price originally paid for it by Owen, plus interest at 5 per cent. = £14,766 (letter from J. Wright to Owen, May 6, 1825). But it does not appear whether the transaction was ever concluded. The building at Orbiston was begun in March, 1825.

Abram Combe, brother of the well-known phrenologists, Andrew and George Combe, was born on January 15, 1785. His father was a brewer in Edinburgh, and the boy chose the profession of a tanner, owing to the accidental circumstance that some tanworks adjoined his father's brewery. His parents were strict Calvinists, and young Abram's childhood and youth were spent under the shadow of that grim faith. Six days of the week he was engaged, from morning till evening, first at school, later in serving his apprenticeship to his trade. On Sunday he went twice to church, and for the remainder of the day was confined to his father's garden, occupied in the study of sermons, and the Longer and Shorter Catechism. After a rather dreary and joyless boyhood he went as a young man to London for two years, and ultimately returned to Edinburgh and set up on his own account as a tanner. Things went well with him in his business. He married in 1812, and soon became a father. Up to 1820 he was known chiefly as a keen but honourable man of business: his affections were apparently concentrated exclusively on his wife and children; to the outer world he showed a critical spirit and a keen sense of the ludicrous, which manifested themselves in satirical speech and occasional droll parodies in verse. In October, 1820, at the age of thirty-five, he went over to New Lanark, had some conversation with Owen, and saw the result of his labours. He straightway became a complete convert to Owen's views, and thereafter the man's whole outlook on life seems to have changed.

His belief in the New System was so ardent that he made a bet with a friend that within five years the Royal

Circus in Edinburgh would be pulled down, and buildings for a Community on Owen's principles erected in its stead. His enthusiasm ultimately, indeed, took a religious form. The periodical in which he has recorded the progress of his greatest experiment is headed "*Register of the First Society of Adherents to Divine Revelation at Orbiston.*" The term "divine revelation," he contends, "can rightly be applied only to the facts and the truths which the Great Governing Power of the Universe reveals to the senses and the understanding,"¹ and those "who have the will to look are able to see in the facts which are revealed to their senses a light from Heaven."²

With this fervour of conviction upon him, Combe devoted the remainder of his life to preaching and practising the truths revealed to him in the New System. He ceased to write epigrams and satires. His attitude towards his relations and towards all who sought his aid became as friendly and affectionate as it had hitherto been repellent. In the autumn of 1821, as we have already seen, he founded in Edinburgh the *Practical Society*, to carry out Owen's principles as far as circumstances would admit. The members of the Practical Society, which included at one time some five hundred or six hundred families, opened a co-operative store, met regularly in the evenings for mutual instruction, dancing, and social intercourse generally, and instituted a school for their children on the New Lanark model. The children numbered about one hundred and thirty, and the schooling under the conduct of Captain Macdonald appears to have exercised a wonderful influence over them.

¹ *Register of Orbiston*, p. 1.

² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

From being utterly riotous and unruly they became in a few weeks orderly, affectionate to their teachers and each other, and filled with zeal for learning. The adult members bound themselves to abstain from strong drink, tobacco and swearing. Combe himself went further and became a vegetarian. Whilst the enthusiasm of the members was still fresh, the Practical Society prospered; but it appears to have lasted less than a year, being ultimately broken up by the constant loss of members, who, belonging mostly to the working classes, were forced to leave Edinburgh in search of employment.¹

Combe next tried to found a Community on a small scale amongst the workmen in his tanyard. He built dormitories and a kitchen for them, and promised a share of the profits of the tannery for all who would join the Community. But this scheme also fell through very quickly. Combe between 1820 and 1825 published several books and pamphlets explanatory of his views. In his latest work, *The Sphere of Joint Stock Companies*, he propounded a scheme for the establishment of a Community on Owen's principles. The project of a Community at Motherwell had about this time fallen through for want of the necessary financial support, and Owen was about to transfer his interest to the enterprise of New Harmony. Hamilton of Dalzell, Jones, and other wealthy persons who had

¹ Only two reports were published, dated respectively February and April, 1822. Some account of its foundation will be found in the *Economist* (1821), Vol. II., pp. 336, 345. See also Captain Macdonald's letter, *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. I., p. 174. The President, William Wilson, wrote to Owen on November 15, 1822, to say that there were about thirty members, chiefly mechanics, who would like to join a Community at once. He asks whether Owen can hold out any hopes of the speedy founding of a Community.

promised subscriptions to the Motherwell scheme, now associated themselves with Combe and purchased the estate of Orbiston, containing two hundred and ninety-one acres, on the banks of the Calder, about nine miles east of Glasgow. A huge building, intended to accommodate about one thousand persons, was begun on March 1, 1825. The capital required was fixed at £50,000, divided into two hundred shares at £250 each, and one hundred and twenty-five shares were actually taken up by the following October, the number of shareholders at that date being sixteen. A substantial stone building was planned, four storeys high, to consist of a centre and two large wings. In the event only the left wing was completed, at a cost of £10,000 : but that, as we learn later, afforded lodging, in 1827, for more than three hundred persons.

The accommodation was planned on a generous scale. Each adult—man or woman—was to have a private apartment, sixteen and a half feet by twelve, fitted up as bedroom and sitting-room combined. There were to be common kitchens and dining-rooms, and large public rooms for conversation and amusement, libraries, etc. All the cooking and eating arrangements were to be as far as possible in common ; and the children were to be lodged in common dormitories, and brought up and educated in common nurseries and schools. Combe's original idea was that the care and education of the children should be a charge on the whole Community ; but as it was found that some of the unmarried members objected to this arrangement, it was agreed that each child should be debited with the entire cost of his maintenance and education, the necessary funds being advanced by the

parents, by Combe himself, or by other friends, in the confident expectation that the children when they reached maturer years would gladly consent that the repayment of their nurture should be a first charge upon the profits of their labour.

The enterprise did not open under the happiest auspices. Combe's unorthodox opinions were notorious;¹ moreover one of his English guests was overheard whistling on the Sabbath day, and the affair caused much scandal in the neighbourhood. Long before the Community was actually started the strangest stories circulated about the morals and behaviour of the prospective communists.² Combe for his part was sincerely shocked at the drunkenness and thriftlessness of his Scotch neighbours. Nevertheless, so absolute was his faith in the New System, that he accepted without any attempt at discrimination all who applied for admission to the Community. In justifying his conduct later he explained, "We set out to overcome Ignorance, Poverty and Vice; it would be a poor excuse for failure to urge that the subjects of our experiment were ignorant, poor and vicious."³

By the end of March, 1826, the left wing—a building 330 feet long, 40 feet broad and four storeys high—was roofed in, and more or less ready to receive its inmates. On Saturday, April 8, the masons and labourers who had been employed by the contractor marched off in procession, and on the following Monday the new era commenced with the cooking of the meals for the

¹ The Superintendent of the New Lanark Stores actually refused, on the ground of Combe's unorthodoxy, to allow the *Orbiston Register* to be sold at the Stores (*Register*, Vol. I., p. 38).

² See *Register*, pp. 14, 15, etc.

³ *Register*, p. 125.



THE
CRISIS



Two woodcuts printed on the title-page of *The Crisis*. The upper picture represents the old immoral world with the dilapidated houses, the beggars, the inn, gallows, lunatic asylum, dog- and cock-fights. The lower picture represents the order and harmony of the New Moral World.

members and their children in the communal kitchen. The experiment was begun under the most unfavourable circumstances. The building was by no means completed inside, the members, in their ardour to enter on the new life, having undertaken to get rid of the contractor's workmen and to finish the plastering, joinery and other necessary work themselves. The weather was extremely bad, the half-made roads were turned into quagmires; the women were discontented; a noisy cur banished sleep at night. Worse than all this, the members began to doubt the New System itself. Little forethought seems to have been given to the cooking and domestic arrangements. Those who did the work knew not where to look for payment; and many housewives expressed the opinion that individualist cooking was better and cheaper. So that the public room for a time was almost deserted. Out of doors things were no better. There was ground to be got ready for potato-planting. Twenty or thirty people dug energetically for an hour, then—since there was no man to direct them—they left off, and dug no more. The land lay idle for a week or two and then was parcelled up into individualist plots.

The first members of the Community are described in severe terms by one of their number: "A worse selection of individuals, men, women and children, could scarcely have been made—a population made up for the most part of the worst part of Society."¹ The adults were steeped in poverty; lazy, dirty and thriftless: "the smell of tobacco in almost every house, and a dunghill beginning to rise under almost every window." The children and youths were no better; they were quarrelsome, unmannerly

¹ *Orbiston Register*, Vol. I., p. 125.

and boisterous. An orchard was robbed in the neighbourhood, and suspicion fell upon the youth of Orbiston; nay, the communal fruit was by clandestine hands plucked untimely from the boughs of the communal trees.

Combe's interpretation of divine revelation would not permit him to exercise compulsion of any kind, nor even, it would appear, to direct the affairs of the Community from outside. The members of the Community, he states in reply to a critic, will be self-governed; and each man must act on his own account, and find out for himself what he can best do. So will he preserve his liberty and learn to realise the full value of his labour.¹

By August, however, the need for more definite organisation had become apparent. Many of the members needed something to replace the hunger-stimulus. They would work by fits and starts, and in the intervals give themselves up to "a languor and listlessness which no words could overcome."² In other words, they could not understand working for the general welfare; they wanted to take as much and give in return as little as possible. Combe was forced to give up his policy of non-interference, and under his guidance the infant Community was organised into squads or companies. The first of these companies, indeed, the Iron Foundry, started on its own initiative, and throughout the whole period of the Community's existence its members appear to have been the most energetic and the most successful. In the spring of 1827 we learn that they were making for sale in the outside markets

¹ *Orbiston Register*, Vol. I, p. 55 *seqq.* ² *Ibid.*, August, 1826, p. 123.

grates, fenders, kettles, goblets and many other articles ; and that they were fitting up a blast furnace, and had ordered a steam crane.¹

The Garden Squad, or Horticultural Company, started under less propitious auspices. A skilled gardener was engaged—a man of unfavourable appearance, but good phrenological development—who disappeared suddenly, after ten days, and the squad were left without any one to direct their energies. However, a year later we find that they had laboured to some purpose ; for nearly a thousand apple and pear trees had been planted by the spring of 1827, the produce of which, it was calculated, would in a few years suffice to pay the entire rent.²

There were also a Dairy Company, which started with the charge of ten cows, and hoped ultimately to have forty ; and a Building Company, which found work ready to their hands in completing the half-finished premises. Nine months later, according to the account already referred to in the *Nottingham Mercury*, the whole length of the upper storey was given up to weaving twine, which was afterwards made up into nets by the children, some of these nets being destined for use by the communal fishing boat, which was to supply the communists with fish of their own catching. There were at the same date three cotton and two silk weavers ; and improved machinery for silk-winding was being fitted up. Yarn was woven into cloth on the premises, and made up by the communal tailors into suits—a warm

¹ Account in *Nottingham Mercury* quoted in the *Co-operative Magazine* for April, 1827.

² *Co-operative Magazine*, Vol. II., pp. 246, 250.

suit costing 20s. for an adult and 14s. for a boy. Cotton shirting, also woven on the premises, cost 10d. a yard, and a whole shirt 3s. 6d. There were two looms at work weaving silk shag into hats, to be worn no doubt by competitive stockbrokers in Glasgow. There were seven shoemakers, who supplied the wants of the Community and did outside work as well. There were cartwrights who made carriages and carts. Lastly, the elder lads worked in the fields or were learning skilled trades. At harvest time, and generally when occasion required, all the members of the Community left their ordinary occupations to take their share of the farm labour. By degrees, too, the domestic department was organised. From the first some women had been appointed to work in the kitchens; others were told off to sweep the stairs; to light and trim the lamps; others to wash the children's clothes, to look after the dormitories and to give instruction in the schoolroom.

The proprietors not only paid the whole cost of construction but advanced most of the capital required for starting the various industries; it being understood that the tenants were ultimately to repay the expenditure, out of the surplus produce of their labour. But the financial arrangements were of the loosest kind. At the outset, as said, all was confusion: there was no one to direct the workers, and some appear to have worked in outside employment, receiving ordinary wages for their labour; but, gradually, as the communal industries were organised, an increasing number gave their whole work to the Community, receiving payment by book credit at the communal store. The ordinary market rate of

wages was paid, in the first instance at any rate. Combe himself was in favour of pure communism ; but he held that in this as in other matters it was useless to attempt to impose a rule until the colonists were willing to accept it—an opinion for which he was sharply criticised in the pages of the *Co-operative Magazine*. In September, 1826, however, a general meeting of the tenants was held, at which, after some hours' debate, a resolution was passed—"That all the members of the Society unite together to produce a common stock, out of which all our common expenditure, hereafter to be agreed upon, will be paid ; and that an equal share of the surplus of our labour be placed to the account of each member of the Community *according to the time occupied by each.*" This resolution, it will be seen, though it falls short of pure communism, affirms the important principle of equal remuneration for all kinds of labour. The resolution was not passed, unanimously ; the representative of the Iron Foundry dissented, preferring the individualist system of unequal remuneration. And it is not clear, from later accounts of the industries within the Society, that the resolution was, in fact, ever carried out in its entirety. But the affirmation of the principle marks an important stage in the progress of Socialism.¹

At the same meeting the tenants offered to take over the whole premises and land from the proprietors, undertaking to pay them 5 per cent. interest on their outlay, and ultimately to repay the whole of the capital advanced ; the representative of the proprietors, Abram

¹ The debate on the question, which is of considerable interest, will be found in the *Orbiston Register* for October, 1826. It is quoted at full length in the *Co-operative Magazine* for November of the same year.

Combe, being made meanwhile Treasurer of the Colony, so as to have the opportunity of safeguarding his own interests and those of his fellow-proprietors. Combe's illness and premature death intervened, and this arrangement also never came to an issue. But it is scarcely doubtful whether, if Combe had lived, the colony could have paid its way without a radical change in its constitution, if not also in its constituents. The latter, as already said, had been admitted as they applied, without any kind of selection; and it was, as one of them said, a promiscuous multitude who fled to Orbiston as to a city of refuge.¹

Some of the most unsatisfactory members had gradually been eliminated, but enough still remained to endanger the working of the enterprise. In the *Orbiston Register* of May 9, 1827, the editorial states that some of the members had given in to the timekeeper a greater number of hours than they had actually worked, and had thus inflated their credit at the Stores. But worse revelations were to follow. It was clearly the bounden duty of the members, whilst the future of the enterprise was still uncertain, to restrict their consumption within the narrowest limits, so as to leave a margin to pay rent, interest, and other public burdens. It appeared, however, that a considerable section of the communists were in the habit of working only just enough to cover their credit at the Stores for food and clothing, withdrawing the whole of their earnings and leaving others to bear the public burdens. The proof of this charge throws some light on the inner workings of the Society. The colony at this time (June, 1827) numbered, exclusive

¹ *Co-operative Magazine*, Vol. II., p. 248.

of children in arms, 298 persons. Of these 221 (104 adults, 44 working boys, 73 children) fed at the public mess.¹ But the remainder (64 adults and 13 children) chose to cater for themselves and to withdraw what they required from the Stores, up to the limits of their credit. A comparative table of the consumption reveals a curious disproportion. In the course of one week the 221 persons consumed, at the public mess, 97 pecks of oatmeal—the 77 purchased 103 pecks; the bread consumed at mess cost £6 3s. 4d.—the bread sold (almost exclusively to the 77) cost £13 16s. 8d.; the sugar consumed by the 221 in mess amounted to 60½ lb.—the 77 made away with 91½ lb.; the minority took nearly three times as much salt and more than four times as much butter as the majority. It was impossible that these 77 persons should really have consumed this enormous amount of food; and the writer of the editorial draws the inference that the surplus was either given away to feed outsiders, or even deliberately exchanged outside for commodities which the purchasers would better have been lacking. Members, he writes, ought to work as hard and live as plainly and simply as they can until success is assured, and our debt paid off: “but many rise no earlier than they can help, and leave their employment as soon as they can; or, if their *time* is occupied, drag through the day as easily and comfortably as possible, and in return for their services grasp all they can get.”²

However, notwithstanding these black sheep, the

¹ The charge for feeding at the public mess was 4s. or 4s. 6d. a week—a sum just sufficient to pay the cost of food and cooking. Probably the sum quoted was the charge for adults. (*Register*, Vol. II., pp. 54, 55.)

² *Orbiston Register*, Vol. II., p. 57.

Community seems to have made steady progress. The external aspect of the settlement improved rapidly as the months went by. Roads and garden walks were finished, shrubs and fruit-trees were planted. The squalor and filth amid which the first settlers—peasants and weavers from the neighbourhood for the most part—were content to live had shocked early visitors to the colony. But in the course of eighteen months there was much change for the better. The kitchen middens which originally stood on each side of the doorways made themselves less obtrusive; the habit of throwing water out of window, if it did not entirely cease, became unfashionable; and the private apartments seem to have been kept decently clean. The kitchen arrangements were improved, and the domestic department generally was more thoroughly organised. Much no doubt still remained to be done: the stairs were occasionally swept, but not apparently washed, nor were the windows cleaned.

The children to the last remained noisy and boisterous. A large playroom was provided for them, but they preferred, after their kind, to play leap-frog on the stairways and passages, to the great annoyance of the more peaceful inmates; they presented a wild scene of misrule and disorder to the astonished eyes and ears of a visitor from Glasgow, who came one Sunday evening in December, 1826, to hear Miss Whitwell lecture.¹ But the improvement in the conduct of the elder lads is perhaps the most encouraging episode recorded in the brief history of Orbiston. At the outset these lads, with nothing to do and no one to direct their energies, had

¹ Report in *Glasgow Free Press*, quoted in *Orbiston Register*, Vol. I., p. 182.

been the terror of their fellow-colonists and a scandal to the neighbourhood. Some of Combe's severest homilies in the early numbers of the *Register* are addressed to these youthful sinners. But one fortunate Sunday in December, 1826, when the patience of their elders was nearly exhausted, A. Campbell took them in hand. He assembled them to the number of about twenty in a large room, where he proposed to occupy their minds with a lecture on elementary physics. For the purpose of some simple experiments he had provided himself with a basin of water, and the happy thought came to him to make this water the text of a sermon on cleanliness. His exhortation had immediate effect ; his hearers carried off the basin, washed their hands and faces in the water, cleaned their shoes with shavings which had been gathered for fire-kindling, and came back in a state of Sabbatic cleanliness to listen to the lecture. This occupied them until dinner ; and when the meal was over they re-assembled, impannelled a jury from their number, and held a formal trial of John Paine for beating and calling names to John Gordon. The charge was proved, and the panel was severely reprimanded. Then followed a homily from Mr. Campbell against tobacco ; and the boys straightway produced their stores of the scandalous vegetable and cheerfully gave them to the flames.¹

Thereafter there was no more trouble with the boys ; all were eager to work ; some in the fields, some at various trades ; many elected to learn joinery, and, with the aid of their instructor, set to work to roof in a large shed.² The latest news we have of the boys

¹ *Orbiston Register*, December 13, 1826, p. 183.

² *Ibid.*, p. 200.

is that some are learning the violin, others the flute, clarionet, French horn, oboe, bugle, trumpet, and all manner of instruments of music, in order to act as an orchestra for the new theatre.

This theatre was the crowning achievement of the colonists. It was constructed on one of the upper floors, and could seat about three hundred people. It was opened in March, 1827, with a performance of Allan Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd*, presented by members of the Community. The scenery was painted by Miss Whitwell, the lady who had produced the historical charts representing the Stream of Time for the walls of the New Lanark schools.

At this time—the spring and summer of 1827—all seemed to be going well with the colony. Owen himself paid a visit to the Community in the summer, and found everything in a most flourishing condition.¹ The prospects of the harvest were good; a large piggery had just been started; an inn had been opened for the reception of visitors; new sewage works were in progress; the foundry and the other trades were doing good business, and the colonists were enjoying life. Private letters are enthusiastic about the happiness in the present, and the glorious hopes for the future. One lady writes that she had never been so comfortable and happy. “It is like another world . . . I have been at a meeting last night, and such mirth I never knew. There is dancing three times a week. Indeed there is nothing but pleasure, with the best of eating and drinking.”²

¹ *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. III., p. 13.

² *Co-operative Magazine*, December, 1826.

But the catastrophe was already near, though Abram Combe, *felix opportunitate mortis*, did not live to see the end of his great experiment. A neglected chill, aggravated by over-exertion in digging the common soil at Orbiston, brought on a fatal illness; and he died on August 11, 1827, happy in the belief that the enterprise to which he had given his fortune and his life itself was "established beyond the probability of failure."¹ From his deathbed he looked back upon his life and the work of his hands and found them good. In his last hours he dictated his epitaph: "That his conduct in life met the approbation of his own mind at the hour of death."²

The latest news from Orbiston, a few weeks after Combe's death, continues the flattering tale. All is going well; the harvest is excellent; there are thirty or forty pigs in the sty; and thirteen milch cows. A dam is being constructed and a waterwheel about to be set up, and a brewery and a tan-yard are in contemplation. A librarian and library committee have been elected, and two rooms appropriated for the books. During the coming winter the boys are to be clothed in tartan, and the girls in purple bombazet.

And on the prospect of these sartorial glories the curtain falls. The immediate cause of the catastrophe is not very clear. After Abram Combe's death—as indeed for some months previously—the management of the Society devolved upon his brother William, who

¹ The phrase is taken from a letter written from Orbiston shortly after Combe's death, published in the *Co-operative Magazine* for November, 1827.

² See the memoir of Combe in the *Orbiston Register*, September 19, 1827.

continued to carry things on as before for a few weeks. But in the late autumn of 1827 he gave the members notice to quit the premises, and the whole concern—land, buildings and standing crops—was shortly afterwards sold by public auction. William Combe's action is said to have been determined by pressure from the mortgagees, who had advanced £16,000 on the security of the land and buildings. But it would appear also that notwithstanding the brave outward seeming the affairs of the Society had not been going well even before Abram Combe's death. At the very time when the theatre was being constructed, and the boys were being taught, at some expense, to play the violin, the communal Stores, we are told, had run out of tea and sugar, and had no money to buy more.¹ It is certain that at the anniversary gathering in April, 1827, the members feasted on ham washed down with tea, because they had no money to buy anything stronger; and the Foundry Company's stock at the same date was rumoured to be below par, and their goods on sale at much less than their real value.²

In the event the buildings were razed to the ground, and now not one stone remains on another to mark the site of Orbiston.

All Combe's property was lost in the catastrophe, and his family were left destitute.³ Hamilton also lost all his money, and went abroad.⁴ A worse fate befell some of those connected with the enterprise. Alex Campbell, the schoolmaster of the boys, and William

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. III., p. 218.

² *Orbiston Register*, April, 1827.

³ Letter to Owen from Mrs. Combe, May 13, 1838.

⁴ Letter to Owen of January 17, 1830.

Shedden, both members of the Foundry Company, were locked up in Hamilton Jail at the instance of some of the creditors, being apparently personally liable for the capital lent for the erection of the foundry. Campbell was, however, by no means discouraged by the events of the three preceding years. He writes to Owen, dating from the jail, on October 3, 1828, that he is more than ever convinced of the truth of Owen's teachings, and that "in the event of liberation" he intends to engage in other plans "for the furtherance of a system which under all circumstances, I am fully persuaded, is as far superior to the present system of Society as knowledge is superior to ignorance." Later Campbell became one of the Social Missionaries, and throughout his life remained an attached and enthusiastic disciple.

CHAPTER XVI

EARLY CO-OPERATORS

ORBISTON was the only Community on a large scale actually founded in this country on Owen's principles prior to 1840. But there were many plans for establishing similar Communities at this time, and two or three other experiments were made, but on a much smaller scale. Towards the end of 1824 the popular movement, which had been inarticulate since catastrophe overtook the London Co-operative and Economical Society, began to revive. In the winter of 1824 was founded the London Co-operative Society, which aimed at removing the difficulties standing in the way of a general acceptance of Owen's views, by means of lectures, discussions, publications of various kinds, "and by every means that could be adopted to place the subject in a clear point of view."¹

The Society began by hiring rooms in Burton Street, Burton Crescent, London, W.C., and held periodical debates on the relative merits of the two systems—Individual Competition and Mutual Co-operation. These debates, which were continued in the later headquarters at Red Lion Square, formed a prominent feature in the Society's propaganda for some years to come. Here are

¹ *Co-operative Magazine*, Vol. I. (1826), p. 55.

some of the subjects advertised for public discussion on these occasions.

Is the position of Mr. Owen correct, that man is not properly the subject of praise or blame, reward or punishment?

Is there any principle in human nature which presents an insurmountable barrier to the co-operative system?

What is the best mode of educating and training children?

Is the labourer entitled to the whole produce of his labour? and why, in the present state of Society, is the lot of the producing classes poverty and wretchedness?

Is not that system of society the best in which equality of wealth, general diffusion of knowledge and perfect liberty co-exist?

Are continuous or detached buildings the best adapted for co-operative associations?

Is the statement of Mr. Malthus, that population has a tendency to increase faster than the means of subsistence, if correct, an insuperable barrier to the co-operative system?

The rooms in Burton Street were not found sufficiently central, and the "Crown and Rolls" rooms in Chancery Lane were chosen as the theatre of the discussions in 1825. The "Crown and Rolls" witnessed a famous debate, which was prolonged from week to week for several months, between the Owenites and the orthodox economists. The discussion arose out of a lecture given on "the System," but the chief battleground was on the

population question. Charles Austin, John Stuart Mill, Roebuck and other members of the Young Liberal party came down night after night to uphold the claims of Malthus and common sense. The leading champion on the Owenite side was William Thompson, supported by Gale Jones and by Thirlwall, the historian, afterwards Bishop of St. David's.¹ In the course of the same year the Co-operative Society started a novel form of propaganda by means of social breakfasts, held monthly on Sundays, at which about fifty people would attend and discuss the advantages of the New System.

In September, 1825, Owen addressed a well-attended and enthusiastic public meeting at the London Mechanics' Institution; and two years later, on his return from one of his visits to America, he gave a series of Sunday morning addresses at breakfasts held at the Co-operative Society's rooms.

In November, 1825, the Society moved its rooms to 36, Red Lion Square, where it remained for some years; and in January of the following year was commenced the publication of the *Co-operative Magazine and Monthly Herald*, a periodical which continued with varying fortunes, and under various names, until the end of 1830.

From the early numbers of the *Co-operative Magazine* we learn much about New Harmony, and about the experiment at Orbiston, then just started on its brief career. But the London co-operators were not content to be merely passive spectators of the trials and triumphs of others. They had formed a plan for establishing

¹ See *Mill's Autobiography*, pp. 123-5, and *Co-operative Magazine*, Vol. I., p. 56.



ROBERT OWEN.

From a woodcut portrait published in the first volume of *The Crisis*.

a Community within fifty miles of London, and even went so far in April, 1826, as to advertise for suitable farms, containing from five hundred to two thousand acres of land, to be purchased or let on long lease.¹ Already in February, 1826, shares to the amount of £4,000 had been taken up; and Owen's return to England in the autumn of that year was expected to bring the project to a speedy issue.²

Similar projects were on foot in other parts of the country. In February of this year, 1826, a meeting was held at the "Freemason's Tavern," Dublin, Captain R. O'Brien in the chair, at which a Dublin Co-operative Society was formed, Lord Cloncurry expressing his approval and sympathy.³ At a later date we learn that the Society was in a flourishing condition, that some thousands of pounds had been subscribed, and that the members were in treaty for a nobleman's seat.⁴

Like most of the schemes for co-operative colonies, however, the Dublin Society's efforts appear to have been without result; at any rate, we hear no more of the project. One millennial vision of this period was, however, actually translated into fact, and enjoyed a brief existence on what Owen, in his later years, would have called the material plane.

In the spring of 1826 was formed the Devon and Exeter Co-operative Society; and in the course of the summer one of the members, Mr. Vesey, a gentleman of some property, joined with a few others in purchasing a small estate of thirty-seven acres near Exeter. Thirteen

¹ *Co-operative Magazine*, Vol. I., p. 106.

² *Ibid.*, p. 57.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. II., p. 250.

co-operators, including a gardener, carpenter, quarrier, well-sinker, etc., started to work at once, to prepare buildings for the communists.¹ A month later we read that twelve cottages were already finished ; and that Mr. Vesey hoped, by a new method, to house four hundred families for a total outlay of one thousand pounds. The situation of the new colony is described as delightful, and the colonists themselves as eager and hopeful for the future. But later in the year the fair prospect clouded. Mr. Vesey, the chief financial supporter of the scheme, withdrew at once his personal co-operation and his capital, and the experiment had to be abandoned. The cause of this betrayal is not precisely stated, but the editor hints at domestic reasons which were possibly uncontrollable.² However, the colonists, in no way discouraged, took another farm in the neighbourhood, and began to build their Community again.

In August of the following year (1827) a general meeting of the new Society—the Dowlands Devon Community—was held, and we learn that the crops are remarkably fine, that the trades in operation are more than paying their expenses—and that though the funds are low, the assets exceed the liabilities. But no new recruits had joined ; and more capital was needed. Still, considering all things, the chronicler finds the prospect not discouraging. Mrs. D. is reported to be alone discontented, apparently because she cannot get enough women to work with her. And thereafter we hear no more of the Devon Community. The editorial retrospect of the progress in 1827 does not mention it by

¹ *Co-operative Magazine*, July, 1826, p. 226.

² *Ibid.*, January, 1827, p. 23.

name, and we may infer therefore that by the end of the year it had ceased to exist. But in place of any formal obituary, we find a passing reference to certain Communities whose members have in the past year been forced by adverse circumstances to dissolve, but have not been disheartened by their temporary failure.¹

But even whilst the experiments at New Harmony and Orbiston and the small colony in Devonshire just described were to the eyes of the hopeful onlooker still far from the final catastrophe, and whilst the London Co-operative Society was still endeavouring to collect the £50,000 required for starting a similar Community on an adequate scale near London, the conviction seems to have been steadily growing amongst the working classes that any attempts to better their condition must, to ensure success, originate with themselves. Owen, the apostle of the movement, after several years' propaganda, had failed to raise in this country the money which he judged to be necessary for providing even one small instalment of the millennium, and was now giving his money and his services in the New World. Combe and Hamilton with their colleagues were fully occupied in Scotland. The fund raised by the London Co-operative Society had amassed £4,000 only towards the necessary £50,000. Even if there were a sufficient number of wealthy men, ready, like Owen and Combe, to come forward and risk their capital in undertakings of this kind, even then the rich philanthropists would naturally want to do the thing in their own way : " and since their way is not our way, there could hardly be that unanimity and boundless confidence in a community established by them, that

¹ *Co-operative Magazine*, January, 1828.

there would be in one founded upon a system of perfect equality, every member of which may say, 'this is ours, and for us.'"¹

Possessed with these ideas, and realising that the scheme of the London Society was on too large a scale, some of the London co-operators began to consider amongst themselves whether a Community deriving its capital wholly from the contributions of the members could not be established on a more economical basis. With this view there was founded in June, 1826, the Co-operative Community Fund Association, whose ultimate objects were identical with those proposed by the larger scheme. But the new Society proposed to raise a fund of £1,250 only, in fifty shares of £25 each. The shares were to be paid for by a minimum weekly contribution of 4s. from each member; it was further provided that though a member was at liberty to subscribe more than 4s. a week, he was not to look for any advantage as a consequence of such extra contribution. When £500 had been accumulated—*i.e.* at the end of twelve months, if all the shares were taken up at once—it was proposed to take on lease the necessary land, and begin the erection of suitable buildings. It was anticipated that by the time the whole capital had been subscribed the buildings would be ready for occupation, and the colonists thereafter in a position to maintain themselves by a suitable combination of manufactures and agriculture.²

At about the same time another Co-operative Community was planned on a like economical basis. The scene of this second experiment was to be in Ireland,

¹ Letter signed J. L. in *Co-operative Magazine*, Vol. I., p. 372.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 224, 308, etc.

within fifteen miles of Cork, and an admirable constitution and code of laws for the proposed colony were drawn up by William Thompson, author of the *Distribution of Wealth*, one of the ablest exponents of the new school of Socialists who derived their moral inspiration from Owen. The document is interesting as containing an authoritative exposition of the economic creed of the Socialists of the period, the fundamental tenet being the assumption, which we have already met with in Owen's *Report to the County of Lanark*, that all wealth is created by manual labour alone, and can be valued only in terms of labour, with the inevitable corollary that the labourer has an indefeasible right to the whole of what he produces. The document begins by setting forth that "more than nine-tenths of the products of the skilled labour of the industrious classes are now consumed by those who themselves produce nothing." It then goes on to define the primary object of a Co-operative Community as being to secure for its members, who, being drawn from the industrious classes, are "the only real producers," "the whole or by far the greater part of the future products of their labour"; by means of "*mutual co-operation* for the supply of each others' wants, and *equal distribution* amongst all of the products of their united industry."¹

The Cork Community when complete was to consist of about 2,000 persons; the adults subscribing £5 each, the children under twelve £2 10s. Land was to be taken at the rate of one acre for each individual, and the experiment was to begin as soon as 200 members had joined. The capital was to be used in

¹ *Co-operative Magazine*, Vol. I, p. 314 *seqq.*

the first instance in purchasing the necessary stock, etc., and in procuring food for the members for the first year. In subsequent years it was calculated that the Community would consume only three-fourths of the annual produce, the remainder being applied to the purchase of machinery and stock, the payment of rent and the purchase of the land. Children were to be supported and educated at the common charges, but from the age of five onwards they were expected to support themselves and defray all the expenses of their education by their own industry. The constitution was to be purely democratic; the direction and organisation of the industry being vested in committees elected by the members and serving only for short terms.

On the assumption that the Community would start with 200 adult members, the following distribution of employments is recommended:—52 for gardening and agriculture; 66 for building and furnishing; 59 for linen, cotton and woollen manufactures; and 23 for miscellaneous employments, such as baker, shoemaker, miller, storekeepers, teachers, etc.

The Cork experiment seems never to have advanced beyond the stage of resolutions and paper constitutions. But the London Co-operative Community Fund Association took an important step forward. In April of the following year, 1827, they announce the formation of an Auxiliary Fund, to be composed of the profits of a trading enterprise carried on by members of the Association. Their idea was in fact to found a General Store or shop, where goods should be retailed to members, the profits going to the common fund. In the first instance apparently the idea was to keep in

the Store mainly articles manufactured by or dealt in by the members. But the advantages of procuring at wholesale price provisions and other goods of common consumption, and of thus intercepting the middleman's profits, soon became apparent. C. F. C., the writer of the letter announcing the formation of the Auxiliary Fund, ventures on a prophecy which co-operators of the present day may read with interest. "I hope one day to see the Association in possession of at least one repository in each of the leading thoroughfares in London. I anticipate the time when that body will arrest the tide of riches in its progress and divert it into a new and publicly beneficial channel, instead of suffering all the gains of commerce to flow into the pockets of particular individuals . . . when it will take up a few of those gains in their progress, from time to time, and by this means emancipate the millions from the control of the units . . . Posterity will then remember it as the Social Redemption Fund."¹

If we substitute "leading towns in the country" for "leading thoroughfares in London" the prophecy is not far wide of the mark at the present day.

In the same number of the *Co-operative Magazine* (May, 1827) there is an article headed "How to procure funds for a Co-operative Community," in which another writer outlines a similar plan. He suggests that the best method to make a beginning would be for the intending colonists to meet together periodically, and sell amongst themselves such articles as their present occupations enabled them to make or to procure economically, and to hand over a percentage of the profit

¹ *Co-operative Magazine*, Vol. II., p. 224.

on each transaction to a common fund. By this means, as the writer points out, a steadily growing capital would be accumulated with little risk; the future colonists would practise themselves in working for a common end, and would get to know their own and each others' qualifications for the more complete co-operation demanded in a Community. The suggestion was quickly adopted, and a few weeks later there was formed the Union Exchange Society. The members agreed to meet together once a month at 36, Red Lion Square, the headquarters of the London Co-operative Society, and to sell to each other such goods as they could command. Ten per cent. was to be levied on the gross sales and handed over to a common fund which, after the expenses of the meeting (1s. 3d. a night) had been paid, was to be divided equally amongst all the members present. The profits, it is explained, were to be divided amongst the members in the first instance, instead of being retained in a common fund, lest discord should arise by the introduction of new members, before the plans for the disposal of the common fund were finally settled. But the chronicler proceeds, "we shall in all probability, at I hope no distant day, determine to have a community."¹

They began by selling tea, bread, flour, boots, shoes, clothes, umbrellas, carved and gilt articles, brass and tin ware. The gross sales for July, 1827, were £4 12s. 6d.; for August £4 17s. 6d. In September, however, the sales amounted to nearly £7, and there was a marked increase not only in the members, but in the number of articles on sale. Butter, cheese, bacon and potatoes

¹ *Co-operative Magazine*, Vol. II., p. 549.

could now be procured in addition to the articles already enumerated.

Of the Union Exchange Society we hear no more after December, 1827. But a more long-lived Society was the Brighton Co-operative Benevolent Fund Association, which was founded on much the same lines and at about the same time. In announcing its formation the Society defines its objects as follows : (1) "To raise by a small weekly contribution a fund for the purpose of enabling proper persons to join Co-operative Communities, by giving the whole or part of the capital, as the circumstances of the individual may require ; (2) to spread a knowledge of the Co-operative system."¹

A few weeks later we learn that the members now numbered 150 and that their contributions to the fund, at 1*d.* a week each, amounted therefore to 12*s.* 6*d.* a week. The members were all of the productive classes, and included agricultural labourers, carpenters, bricklayers, printers, cabinet-makers, turners, painters, gardeners, dressmakers, bakers, tailors, tinmen, copper-smiths, shoemakers, bookbinders, grocers, domestic servants, etc. By July they had hit upon a more rapid method of accumulating the funds required, and had started a Trading Association with capital in £5 shares, of which forty were taken up by the end of September.²

In a circular issued at this time their economic creed

¹ Letter dated April 12, 1827, published in the *Co-operative Magazine* for May, 1827, p. 225.

² The shares were not fully paid up at once. The arrangement was that 1*s.* a week should be paid by the shareholders on each share, and that all profits on the trading should accumulate until the £5 was fully paid up. (*Co-operative Magazine* for September, 1827, pp. 419, 420.)

and their aims were clearly defined. "They see that the real cost of all commodities is the amount of labour employed in preparing them for use"; and yet the rich, who take little or no share in the work, grow richer, and the workers find it each year more difficult to procure the bare necessities of life. With a view to secure to the working classes a larger share of the fruits of their own labour they announce that they have already started buying goods wholesale, and retailing them, on the ordinary stores principle; but they also contemplate "the interchange of the articles produced by their own labour at the real cost of production.

"This they expect to accomplish by having a Store, Repository or Exchange, in which a confidential agent will receive from members of the Association such articles as they produce, and, according to a scale authorised by a Committee or Council of work, give them an order for other commodities in Store to an equal value at prime cost, or a note for the value of so much labour as is brought in; which note may be cancelled when articles of that value are issued for it, so that the labour notes may always represent the quantity of goods in Store and work unrequited."¹

In January, 1828, we learn that the numbers have increased to two hundred; that the members are looking out for a schoolmaster, and hope to educate all their children together. It is intended, as soon as the children are old enough, that they should be taught various branches of industry, for the benefit of themselves and the Community. Finally it is announced that "when they are able to afford it, which they expect to be in about

¹ *Co-operative Magazine* for November, 1827.

a year, they will hire a farm with a purchasing clause, locate themselves, and live in a Community.”¹

From a sympathetic article published in the *Quarterly Review* for November, 1829, we gather some further particulars of this Society. Apparently the early members included, besides the artisans and working men referred to, a few small capitalists who took up several of the shares in the Trading Association. Differences of opinion soon developed; the working men were unanimous in their desire to carry out the original intention, and endeavour to found a Community; the capitalists wished the concern to remain as a joint-stock trading association that they might continue to receive their profits. Eventually these latter seceded from the association, receiving back the amount of their original capital, but leaving the accumulated property to the would-be communists. The seceders built a fishing-boat with their capital, and were reported to be making a handsome profit out of it. The original Society, at the date of the *Quarterly* article, had, in addition to their shop, a garden of twenty-eight acres, and were about to open another shop, to dispose of their garden produce. They were giving employment, as salesmen and gardeners, to seven of their own number. Ultimately they hoped to procure land and build on it a terrace of small houses, with a bazaar for their products in front. In the meantime, as they could not afford to risk their tiny capital, they had started a separate subscription fund for the benefit of the sick, and for the families of those who should die. The reviewer attributes the success attained by the Society mainly to the great care shown by them in

¹ *Co-operative Magazine* for January, 1828.

admitting new members. The characters of all applicants for membership were closely scrutinised, and no drunkards or idle persons were admitted.¹

The Brighton Co-operative Benevolent Fund Association, or, as they seem to have been called later, the West Street Co-operative Society, never realised their ideal of a self-sufficing Community living on their own land. But it may fairly be claimed for them that much of the success of the Co-operative movement of 1820-30 was due to their example. The earliest provincial Co-operative periodical, the Brighton *Co-operator*, was started in connection with their enterprise. The *Co-operator*, which ran for about two years (May, 1828, to August, 1830), is not a formal chronicle of the movement so much as a series of homilies on the benefits of co-operation, as a means of escape for the working man from the misery and degradation entailed by the hopeless fight against capital aided by machinery. But we learn incidentally from its pages something of the rapid progress made.

In May, 1828, there are recorded only four Societies in the United Kingdom—the parent Association at 36, Red Lion Square, London, the West Street, Brighton, Society; another Society at 10, Queen's Place, Brighton, with the high-sounding title of "The Sussex General Co-operative Trading Association," and a Society at 20, Marine Place, Worthing. The Queen's Place Society was founded on the same general lines as its sister Association. It proposed to start by purchasing

¹ Some account of the Brighton Society is given in letters written to Owen by one of the members, P. O. Skene, in September and October, 1828. The lease of the garden ground had then just been completed.

provisions wholesale and retailing them at current prices, "leaving the profit to accumulate for the purpose of purchasing or leasing land for the formation of a Community on the principles of mutual co-operation and equal distribution of property as set forth by that worthy philanthropist, Robert Owen."¹

In its last number (August, 1830) the *Co-operator* was able to announce the existence of three hundred societies in all parts of the United Kingdom, and a Co-operative Bazaar at 19, Greville Street, Hatton Garden, London. That all these Societies had before them as their ultimate aim the formation of a Community is not clear. But we know that the West Street Society received applications from intending Associations in several parts of the country asking for instructions how to proceed.² And the editor³ of the Brighton *Co-operator* is quite clear as to the final cause of all Co-operative Trading Associations. In the first number he describes the four original Societies as founded "with the intention of ultimately purchasing land and living in Community."⁴ Later this sentence disappears, and the Societies are referred to simply as Co-operative Societies. But in the issue for October, 1828, he defines the objects of such Societies as threefold. First, to protect their members against poverty; secondly to secure comforts for them; and thirdly to achieve independence. And the means to these ends are, first a weekly subscription from the members to procure capital for trading with; then the manufacturing for themselves; "lastly, when the capital

¹ *Co-operative Magazine*, March, 1828.

² *Ibid.*, October, 1828.

³ His name was King. See later, Chapter XVII.

⁴ *Co-operator*, May, 1828.

has still further accumulated, the purchase of land and living upon it in Community.”¹ And from an article in the following number it is evident that the Community which he contemplates, and which he holds up for an example to his fellow co-operators, is one in which all are to have an equal share in the good things ; and in which none shall have cause to envy another for his superior strength or skill, since he and all his fellows will share in the benefits of that superiority.

Again, in accordance with the principles of their founder, stress is laid by all co-operators upon the importance, in the new system, of education. The members of a Co-operative Society, we read, will meet together for mutual instruction and will pay special attention to the education of their children. They will send them to the best schools in the neighbourhood ; or, better still, when they can afford it, they will appoint a schoolmaster themselves.²

In addressing a nascent Co-operative Society at Leeds, we find the delegate from a Birmingham Society enumerating the education of the children as one of the prime objects of co-operators ;³ and part of the last number of the Brighton *Co-operator* is devoted to an account of Fellenberg’s experiments in educating the children of the poor and teaching them to earn their own subsistence.

¹ The Editor of the *Co-operative Magazine* expresses himself to the same effect. The object of a Trading Association or Co-operative Society, he says, is briefly to buy wholesale, sell retail to members, “and to accumulate a fund for the purpose of renting land for cultivation and the formation thereon of a Co-operative Community.” (*Co-operative Magazine*, January, 1830.)

² *Co-operator*, October, 1828.

³ *Ibid.*, November, 1829.

Such, then, were the ideals and aspirations of the first Co-operative Societies. They were small associations of artisans and others, met together in the common hope of ultimately founding a Community in which they could live together in fellowship, enjoying in common the whole fruits of their labour, islanded from the poverty and degradation around them, and leaving to their children an inheritance more precious even than this material wellbeing, in minds and characters moulded by a rational system of education to the full stature of a man. To these early co-operators the word co-operation was synonymous with brotherly love; the petty trading profits were an earnest of liberty for themselves and their children; and the grocery store appeared as an antechamber to the millennium.

CHAPTER XVII

LABOUR EXCHANGES

DURING the progress of most of the events described in the last two chapters Owen was engaged in conducting the great experiment at New Harmony and in lecturing in the chief towns of the United States, and had but little attention to spare for the doings of his followers in this country. But in the course of the year 1829, after the debate at Cincinnati with the Rev. Alexander Campbell, he returned to England, and did not revisit the United States until the summer of 1844. The interval of fifteen years was spent in active public work in this country, some account of which will be given in the chapters which follow. Nearly the whole of this period is covered by two newspapers edited by Owen, or directly under his control—the *Crisis*, which ran from 1832-34 and the *New Moral World*, which, starting on November 1 of the latter year, did not come to an end until the autumn of 1845. There are abundant records, therefore, of Owen's public activities. But before proceeding to consider this aspect of his career, it will be convenient to give a few particulars of his personal life and affairs during this period.

During his stay in England in the winter of 1828-29 Owen seems to have severed his connection with New Lanark. He himself resided for part of this visit at

Mr. Walker's house at 49, Bedford Square, London. His wife and three daughters—the sons had already settled in New Harmony—remained at Braxfield for some months, but, as we learn from a letter written by Jane Owen to her father in November, 1828, they were at this time looking out for a small house at Kirkcaldy or Hamilton. Ultimately they moved to Allan Bank, Hamilton; but this appears to have been only a temporary home, for Mrs. Owen writes to her husband from Allan Bank on September 23, 1830, that they cannot yet find a house to suit them. If she is to live within her income, she cannot afford a higher rent than £30 a year. She is dismissing two of the servants, a maid, and the man who works in the garden: she intends to keep only two maids in future. She goes on to speak of Anne's serious illness, and her own need of Owen's presence; "Oh my dear husband, how much I feel the want of you to advise with in a time of so much anxiety. . . . I hope you will remember next Thursday, the day when we became *one*—thirty-one years ago, and I think from what I feel myself that we love one another as sincerely and understand one another much better than we did thirty-one years ago. My sincere wish is that nothing may ever happen to diminish this affection."

In the following month Anne died. In the thirteenth of the *Lectures on an Entire New State of Society*,¹ probably published in this year, Owen gave to his London disciples a brief account of his eldest daughter's life and her conversion to his own views. She had devoted her time mainly to teaching in the New Lanark Schools,

¹ The book bears no date of issue.

and to study. The last book she had read, just before the commencement of her fatal illness, was Brown's *Philosophy of the Human Mind*. A few memoranda found amongst her papers are printed at the end of the lectures referred to.

In the following spring Mrs. Owen herself died; and Mary, the youngest daughter, followed her mother and sister in the spring of 1832.¹ The surviving daughter, Jane, proceeded to New Harmony to join her brothers, and ultimately married Robert Fauntleroy and settled there.

Owen's only other near relation, according to her own account, was his sister, Mrs. Weaver, to whom he sent regular remittances. A nephew, Robert Owen Davies, who was in somewhat better circumstances, also figures in the Manchester Correspondence.

Of Owen's money affairs after the New Harmony experiment we have no exact account; but it is clear that he was a comparatively poor man. He had a good deal of landed property at New Harmony, and in 1831 we find from letters written to him by his solicitor J. Wright, an old friend of the family, that he had £6,000 invested in the New Lanark Mills, and was receiving interest on this sum at the rate of 5 per cent.—£300 a year. Some considerable part of this balance of his fortune was, however, probably lost in the Labour Exchange experiments of 1832-3.²

Robert Dale Owen tells us that some years after the purchase of New Harmony, hearing that their father's

¹ *Crisis*, Vol. I., p. 15.

² See R. Dale Owen, *Threading my Way*, p. 261, and *Life of Robert Owen*, Philadelphia (1866), p. 224. See also the latter part of this chapter.

funds were running low, he and his brother William transferred to Robert Owen their shares—£20,000 in all—in the New Lanark Mills. Owen certainly had money, though probably not very much, all through the period of the *New Moral World*. We find him, for instance, contributing over £700 to the Queenwood scheme. At a later date, apparently 1844,¹ he appears again to have exhausted his resources. Robert Dale Owen accordingly presents his father with an audaciously cooked account—not unworthy to be compared with the Queenwood balance-sheets—by which a balance of £640 standing to Robert Owen's credit in the account with his sons is so manipulated that it ultimately grows to the respectable figure of £6,000. On this sum Robert Owen's three surviving sons propose to pay their father for the remainder of his life interest at the rate of 6 per cent.—£360 a year. This arrangement appears to have been continued until his death.

Thus when Owen returned to this country at the end of 1829 he came as a comparatively poor man. His enthusiasm, however, was unabated. His experiences at New Harmony had by no means led him to abandon the project of forming a Community of Equality and Co-operation. Many of his lectures during these years were devoted to expounding his plan; the model of a Community quadrangle was still occasionally exhibited; and a picture of it formed the heading of his organ *The Crisis* (1832-4) during a great part of its career, though it was displaced for a time by a representa-

¹ The document in the Manchester Correspondence is undated, but is enclosed in a letter from R. D. Owen dated September 18, 1844. The letter, however, makes no reference to the document. See *Threading my Way*, p. 263.

tion of the National Equitable Labour Exchange. But he no longer devoted his entire attention to the endeavour to found such a Community. We hear no more of the national fund of £100,000: no bishops or statesmen were solicited to lend their names to committees for the purpose. He even discouraged the attempts of some of his followers towards action which he considered premature; and much dissatisfaction was caused by his opposing a scheme for founding a Community propounded at the Birmingham Co-operative Congress of October, 1831, and ultimately withdrawing his name from the committee. But this Fabian attitude was not wholly due to the lessons taught by the disastrous experience of New Harmony. During the years 1825-29, the greater part of which, as already shown, Owen had spent in America, the condition of things in this country had developed, and fresh opportunities for action of a congenial kind opened out before him.

We have traced in the preceding chapter the rise of the new Co-operative Societies. At the beginning of the year 1830 they numbered throughout the kingdom nearly three hundred;¹ and a year or two later had risen to between four and five hundred.² The British Association for promoting Co-operative Knowledge, founded in May, 1829, acted as the mouthpiece of these Societies: and during the greater part of the year 1830 two magazines, the *Co-operative Miscellany* and the *British Co-operator* appeared simultaneously in London; while the *London Co-operative Magazine* did

¹ Thompson, *Directions for Establishment of Communities*, prefatory note.

² *Crisis*, Vol. I., p. 59 *bis* (June, 1832).

not come to an end until after March of the same year.

All these Societies recognised that they owed their existence to Owen's teaching and inspiration, and looked up to him as their founder and prophet. In the first number (January, 1830) of the *Co-operative Miscellany* there is an interesting editorial on the state of the country, in which the remedies for the existing distress put forward in the name of Malthus, the various proposals for the amendment of the currency, the political reforms urged by Hunt and Cobbett, are contrasted with the effectual and universal remedy taught by Owen. "Notwithstanding the influence of men and measures, other steps are actively moving onwards towards the diffusion of the views of Mr. Owen of New Lanark, which are now generally known as the principles of Co-operation. These principles breathe universal love of our fellow beings ; industry among all classes ; equality of privileges for all the human race ; peace and goodwill to all mankind ; the equal distribution of labour and wealth, and universal knowledge and happiness."

An enthusiastic co-operator, one James Burns, writing to Owen from Armagh, in June of the same year, to announce the formation of the first Armagh Co-operative Society, hails him as the great teacher of mankind. "The supreme merit is yours of devising a plan at once effectual, simple and stupendous, of rendering the natural selfishness of each the instrument of happiness to all. My soul is too full of admiration and gratitude for the goodness of your heart and the value of your labours to permit me to trespass any longer on your time by entering further into this glorious system."

The aims, methods, and aspirations of these Societies, as originally shaped by their first members, are clearly set forth in William Thompson's book, *Practical Directions for the Speedy and Economical Establishment of Communities*.¹ He defines the method of co-operation as "the voluntary union of the industrious or productive classes, in such numbers as to afford a market to each other, by working together for each other, for the mutual supply, directly by themselves, of all their most indispensable wants." But, he continues, "all have the intention of ultimately forming themselves into complete Co-operative Communities as soon as they shall have saved out of the profit of their trading fund . . . an additional sum sufficient to stock and rent the land necessary to afford them wholesome food." He proceeds to give directions to make the establishment of such Communities, by means of joint stock associations, "as easy as the establishment of any ordinary manufacture." The two bases of his ideal Community were

(1) "*Equal Distribution* ; that which affords to every individual equally exerting, or equally willing to exert, his or her faculties for the common good, equal means of physical, social and intellectual enjoyment." This equal distribution did not mean an equal amount of food and clothing for each individual ; but an amount "proportioned to the physical necessities of each."

And (2) "*Community of Property or Possessions*"—i.e. "that every adult person shall possess everything, that is to say, all the lands, houses, machinery, implements and other stock of the Community, in as ample a

¹ London, 1830.

manner as they are possessed by any other member whatever" (pp. 4, 5).

For the rest, the detailed arrangements of Thompson's model Community follow pretty closely upon the lines sketched out by Owen. The book contains a plan of the proposed quadrangle, to accommodate 2,000 persons, with minute instructions as to the domestic arrangements, the provision for sanitation, lighting and ventilation; the rotation of crops, the organisation of industry, and the intercourse of the sexes; together with suggestions for the regulation of the birth-rate.

That Thompson's book fairly represented the aspirations, at any rate of a considerable, and that the most articulate, section of co-operators at this period is evident from many references in the periodical literature and in Owen's private correspondence, and from the proceedings of the Co-operative Congresses. Thus J. Emerson, writing to Owen in February, 1831, to give an account of the spread of Co-operation in Ulster, says, "best of all there is a growing affection and brotherly love amongst our members, which is manifested more and more every day, so that the happy moment, the wished for object—community of property and interest—may not be so far distant as some would lead us to imagine."

At the first Co-operative Congress, held in Manchester in May, 1831, it was unanimously resolved, "That this Congress considers it highly desirable that a Community on the principles of Mutual Co-operation, United Possessions, and Equality of Exertion and of the means of Enjoyment shall be established in England as soon as possible" . . . and it was resolved further, upon the

plan laid down by Mr. William Thompson, "that immediate application be made to one hundred and ninety-nine other Co-operative Societies, in order to obtain their concurrence in the project of electing a member from each Society, and supplying him in such manner as they shall deem best with the sum of £30, in order that an incipient Community of two hundred persons, with a capital of £6,000, may immediately be formed in some part of England."¹

At the second Congress, held in Birmingham in October of the same year, the subject was under renewed discussion, and the name of Robert Owen was added to the Committee appointed to carry the scheme into effect. Owen, however, as already said, shortly withdrew his name; and was reproached by his more enthusiastic disciples with having done much to discourage the project.

At the third Congress, held in London, in May, 1832, the Birmingham Committee reported that their circular inviting subscriptions had met with a response in two instances only. The "First Birmingham" had paid a deposit of £6 for two shares; and the Kendal Society had expressed their intention of subscribing, but had not yet sent their deposit.² Partly, no doubt, this meagre response was due to the paralysing effect of Owen's secession; but the committee indicates what was probably the more potent cause—the Societies had already invested all the money they could spare in purchasing machinery and raw materials. From that date onwards we hear little for some years about the

¹ From a printed circular in the Manchester Collection.

² *Crisis*, Vol. I., p. 23.

projected Community. The title page of *The Crisis*, indeed, from February to April, 1833, exhibited a representation of a Community building, and again from September, 1833, to April, 1834, a more ambitious design contrasting the picturesque squalor of the competitive system with the rectangular comfort of the new world. Efforts towards community still continued to be made by groups of individuals, and Societies still flourished, under such titles as "The Moral Union of the Friends of the Rational System of Society,"¹ for the purpose of training their members in the habits and principles requisite for life in a Community. William Thompson died in 1833, and in his will left £10,000 to some Socialist² trustees, for the purpose of founding a Community. The will, however, was contested by some of the creditors on the ground that the estate was insufficient to meet the claims upon it, and ultimately a Receiver was appointed. As we hear no more of the Trust Fund, it is to be presumed that the money was absorbed in meeting law costs and other liabilities.³

For most co-operators, however, the necessities of the moment, the mere stress of living, had for the time thrust the remoter ideal into the background. Some of the earliest Co-operative Societies, as we have seen in the last chapter, had been little more than

¹ *Crisis*, Vol. III., p. 102, and elsewhere.

² The word was gradually coming into use in Co-operative Literature in the course of the years 1833 and 1834. Its first occurrence in this country is traced to a letter to the *Poor Man's Guardian*, August 24th, 1833. It had, however, made its appearance in France in the previous year (*Life of Owen*, by Dolléans, p. 204).

³ *Crisis*, Vol. IV., p. 56.

grocery stores. But the typical Society from 1830 onwards was an association of members of the same trade, who subscribed a small capital in order to purchase the necessary material for providing employment, in the first instance, for any of their members who might be out of work at the time, and ultimately of giving employment to the whole of their number. Owen's principles practically forbade competition, and there seems to have been no definite aim amongst the early productive co-operators of actually competing with ordinary capitalist enterprises. They were anxious simply that each man should receive the due reward of his labour.

In the first instance, no doubt, the Societies were able to dispose of the products of their industry locally, partly to the outside public, partly to members of kindred Societies. But very soon the need for a wider market became apparent, and Exchange Bazaars were formed, to which each Co-operative Trade Society sent up its surplus produce for sale. One of the first of these Exchange Bazaars was opened by the British Association for promoting Co-operative Knowledge at 19, Greville Street, Hatton Garden, in the early part of 1830.¹ At this time there were over forty Co-operative Societies in London alone,² from which the Bazaar could draw its supplies; and the North-West of England United Co-operative Society two years later had a store at which thirty Societies dealt.³ But shortly, under the inspiring influence of a great idea,

¹ *British Co-operator*, p. 47; Lovett's *Autobiography*, p. 42.

² See list in *British Co-operator*, p. 24.

³ *Crisis*, Vol. I., p. 20.

the Exchange Bazaars reached an enormous development.

We have already, in the constitution of the proposed Cork Community, drawn up by William Thompson, and in the prospectus of the Brighton Co-operative Benevolent Society,¹ met with the doctrine which underlay all the socialist and co-operative speculations of the time—that all wealth is the product of human labour, with its implicit assumption, that the only labour to be taken into account is the labour of the hands—the labour of the “industrious” or “productive” classes. The elaboration and wide dissemination of this belief throughout the democratic movement of 1830 and onwards was largely due to the writings of Thompson himself, Hodgskin, and other men who had come under Owen’s personal influence.²

It seems doubtful whether Owen, himself a master manufacturer, ever held the doctrine in its extreme form. But he was one of the first, in the *Report to the County of Lanark*, to propound, as a practical corollary to the doctrine of labour as the only source of wealth, that “the natural standard of value is human labour,” and to suggest the setting up, for purposes of exchange, of a standard labour unit.³ As already indicated, it was probably the public discussion which followed on the recommendations of Sir. R. Peel’s Committee for the resumption of cash payments which set Owen’s mind to work on the intricacies of the

¹ See above, pp. 381, 386.

² See *The Right to the Whole Produce of Labour*, Menger, with a preface by H. S. Foxwell, London, 1899; and Wallas’s *Life of Francis Place*, pp. 273, 274.

³ See above, Chapter xii., pp. 273-4.

currency question. At the time which we are now considering, 1830-34, the same causes were again at work. There was much debate on the part played by an inadequate currency system in causing or aggravating national distress; and Attwood, Cobbett, and indeed almost every leading reformer had his own particular remedy for the attendant evils.

It was natural, then, that the idea of a labour currency should be revived in connection with the transactions carried on at the Exchange Bazaars. The project had actually been given a trial in America. One of the members of the New Harmony Community, Josiah Warren, had after the collapse opened a Time Store at Cincinnati, at which all goods were exchanged in return for notes representing hours of labour.¹ From the fourth quarterly report of the British Association for promoting Co-operative Knowledge, published early in 1830, we learn that Owen, no doubt with Warren's experiment in his mind, had advocated the use of labour notes at the Greville Street Bazaar. The committee announce that, in lieu thereof, they propose to issue exchangeable receipts against the goods deposited, for "it is impossible for us to fix upon the exact average value of an hour's labour, or the necessary time required in different parts of the country by different workmen, until the whole of the labour of Co-operation goes into one Grand Bazaar, or National Bank of manufactures."²

¹ Noyes, *History of American Socialisms*, p. 95. It will be remembered that the Brighton Co-operative Benevolent Fund Association had suggested labour notes (see above, p. 386).

² *British Co-operator*, p. 47. The date of the Report is not given; nor the date of the periodical, but probably the latter date is April, 1830.

Early in 1832 William King, late editor of the Brighton *Co-operator*, who had for some time been an advocate of the principle, actually succeeded in establishing a Labour Exchange at the Gothic Hall, New Road.¹ By an advertisement in the fourth number of *The Crisis* (April 28, 1832) we learn that manufactured goods, raw materials or labour can be exchanged at the Gothic Hall "on an equitable time valuation."

Owen was not long in following the lead thus given. In an editorial in *The Crisis* for June, 1832,² the argument for Labour Exchanges is concisely set forth.

"Hundreds of thousands of persons of all the various trades in existence rise every morning without knowing how or where to procure employment. *They can each produce more than they have occasion for themselves, and they are each in want of each other's surplus produce. . . .* The usual course pursued by these different persons to obtain the produce of each other has been to convert their stock into money by disposing of it to a money holder, or middleman, and then exchanging the money for the articles they may require, either with the producer, or most generally to another middleman; but should there be a scarcity of money, or the middleman not feel inclined to take the produce offered, the producer must make a considerable sacrifice to obtain it, by giving a greater proportion of his produce before he can get possession of the articles he requires, thus being entirely dependent upon the middleman, who always obtains a profit by retaining a part of the pro-

¹ Lovett, p. 47.

² *The Crisis*, which started in April, 1832, was edited for the first twelve months by Robert Owen with the assistance of his son Robert Dale Owen.

duce for himself on every article that passes through his hands, to the manifest injury of the producer, who parts with his own produce at a disadvantage, and obtains that of another at an advanced price.

“Now there is no necessity for the middleman. Producers can do without him—they merely want to come in contact with each other, and they can exchange their respective produce to their mutual advantage, and to the advantage of the general consumer.”

But a standard of value and a medium of exchange are needed.

“All wealth proceeds from labour and knowledge.

“And labour and knowledge are generally remunerated according to the time employed.

“Hence it is proposed to make *time* the standard or measure of wealth.”¹

The new medium of exchange will therefore be notes representing time or labour value. For this new currency two properties are claimed.

(1) That it can be increased or diminished in amount in precise proportion to the increase or diminution of the wealth which it represents.

(2) That it will be unchangeable in value.

But Owen did not contemplate the immediate and entire reconstruction of our social and economic arrangements; he proposed to adjust his new standard to existing markets and rates of exchange. And the new standard could not be made to fit without some sacrifice of its original simplicity. The two crucial problems were how to reduce different kinds of labour, paid at various rates in the outside markets, to a common

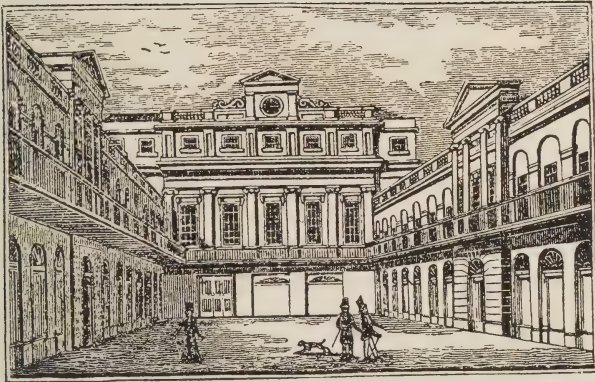
¹ *Crisis*, Vol. I., pp. 59, 60 *dis.*

denominator ; and how to measure the time-value of labour as embodied in the raw material. The actual time standard was arrived at as follows : The average day's labour was reckoned at ten hours, at the rate of *6d.* an hour, these wages being taken as the mean between the wage of the best and the worst paid labour. And all rates of labour, together with the value of the raw material, were expressed in terms of this unit. Thus, to take an illustration, if a cabinet-maker, whose labour in the open market was paid for at the rate of *1s.* an hour, brought a chest of drawers to the Equitable Labour Exchange to be valued, its price in labour hours would be computed as follows : First the value of the raw material would be set down in vulgar pounds, shillings and pence ; then the value of the labour would be added in the same base medium ; the whole would then be divided by *6d.*, and the quotient would represent the number of hours to be entered on the labour note. This "time-standard," it will be seen, was hardly less a fiction than the "economic man" of another school of thinkers. Further, in actual practice a commission of *1d.* in the shilling was charged to the depositor, to cover the working expenses of the Exchange. So that even the profits of the middleman were not wholly abolished.

Owen was at this time (June, 1832) in occupation of some extensive premises in the Gray's Inn Road, near King's Cross, which had been made over to him on terms unhappily of a rather indefinite character by the lessee, William Bromley, who was, or professed to be, an ardent admirer of the new system and its prophet. The premises were used as the headquarters of the

“Institution for Removing Ignorance and Poverty.” The building, a representation of which forms the head-piece of *The Crisis* throughout the first volume, was of considerable size, and built, like an old-fashioned inn, round a central courtyard, with an open gallery running all round at the level of the first-storey windows. It was therefore well adapted for the purposes of a bazaar and warehouse; and here, in fact, the National Equitable Labour Exchange was opened on Monday, September 17, 1832.

The deposits in the first few days were extraordinarily numerous, so much so that the pavement was blocked; and the stores became so congested that on the Thursday it became necessary to close the Exchange to the public for three days, to admit of the goods already deposited being properly arranged and priced. Gold and silver money was accepted in the first few days, so *The Crisis* exultingly records, only as bullion, and a small commission, as with other goods, was levied on the transaction. Thus 20s. 6d. in silver or 20s. 2d. in gold was received in exchange for forty labour notes of the nominal value of one pound sterling. Labour notes were accepted in payment for tickets at the social festivals given monthly at the Institution. Many tradesmen in the neighbourhood put up notices in their windows that labour notes would be taken in payment for their goods. It is said that some of the theatres were willing to accept them. E. Nash, writing to Owen in the middle of November, 1832, says that the toll-keeper at Waterloo Bridge accepted labour notes in payment of the toll; and Pare writes from Birmingham that the workmen at some large ironworks, who were



THE EQUITABLE LABOUR EXCHANGE.

Two views showing each end of the building, from woodcuts
in *The Crisis*.

only working half time, had expressed their willingness to accept labour notes in payment, if their masters would work full time and send the produce to the Bazaar.¹ A few weeks later, however, Charles West, apparently then a clerk at the London Exchange, and subsequently secretary to the Birmingham Branch, writes to complain that he has to pay £5 for rent, and would like to receive £5 in cash, instead of in notes; he had not understood when he threw up a situation in the country, and came to London to take service in the Exchange, that he would be paid entirely in labour notes.²

So confident were Owen and his followers of the triumphant success of the experiment that on September 24, a week after the opening, Owen, addressing a crowded meeting of the "unproductive industrious" classes—*i.e.* the shopkeepers and distributors generally— informed them that the Equitable Exchange would form a bridge over which society would pass from the present to another and a better state of things; and warned them to come over before it was too late. Robert Dale Owen suggested that such of them as were willing to work might emigrate to New Harmony and learn a useful trade. Finally the meeting unanimously resolved "that a Committee be formed to take into immediate consideration the best mode of relieving the non-productive industrious classes from their present distress, and from the anticipation of much greater suffering."³

But all did not work with perfect smoothness at the Institution. Great difficulty was experienced in arranging

¹ Manchester Correspondence, letter dated October 24, 1832.

² Letter of December 20, 1832, in Manchester Correspondence.

³ *Crisis*, Vol. I., p. 119.

and valuing the ever-growing piles of goods deposited, and the Exchange once more had to close its doors for a few days to permit of stock-taking, and finally was forced to lay down a rule refusing to accept deposits of less than forty hours' value. There were complaints, too, against the system of valuing adopted. An anonymous tailor wrote to the *Times* stating that he had paid 36*s.* for cloth and trimmings wherewith to make a coat, and had taken it when made to the Exchange; after three days' delay he received labour notes representing 32*s.* in cash—less than the actual cost of the material.¹ To most persons it would have appeared probable either that a mistake had been made in the valuation, or that the complainant had not accurately stated the facts. But Owen would not accept either of these alternatives. He proceeded boldly to justify the transaction. A low valuation, he explained, had been purposely adopted in order to enable the Exchange to compete successfully with outside traders, as well as to attract outside custom. He adds, for the consolation of the aggrieved tailor, that if his coat had been appraised below its nominal value at outside rates, no real injury was inflicted upon him, since all other classes of goods in the store were appraised at the same low valuation, and his labour notes retained, therefore, the same purchasing power.² It is added, in a leader in *The Crisis* on the question, that it is understood that Mr. Owen's 'answer has given general satisfaction. It can hardly have given satisfaction to the tailor, who would, on Owen's own showing, have been in a better position if he had saved his labour and brought his 36*s.* in cash to the stores. Nor can it have

¹ *Times*, October 2, 1832.

² *Crisis*, Vol. I., p. 123.

given much satisfaction to the shareholders and friends of the Exchange; for an Institution which apparently contemplated selling its goods below their cash value, not only to members, but to the outside public, could hardly be expected to maintain itself for long.

However, the week after another tailor wrote to say that his experience at the Exchange had been very different. He took there a coat and a pair of trousers, and received the full market price for his labour. Both coat and trousers, he adds, were misfits, and, presumably, unsaleable elsewhere.

Another difficulty was the supply of provisions. However, a merchant wrote from Southampton offering one hundred tons of pink-eyed potatoes, and expressed his willingness to accept labour notes in exchange. A baker undertook to supply bread to the Exchange, and to receive half cash and half notes in payment. Coals and other provisions were purchased wholesale on similar terms, and retailed to the members in like manner.¹

Up to the end of the year the Exchange continued to transact an enormous business, the chief depositors being tailors, cabinet-makers and shoemakers. In the seventeen weeks ending December 22, 1832, the deposits represented 445,501 hours and the exchanges 376,166 hours, leaving a balance of stock in hand representing 69,335 hours—£1,733 7s. 6d.

A branch was started at the Rotunda in the Blackfriars Road on December 8, and in the first five weeks 32,759 hours were deposited and 16,621 withdrawn. The end of the year, however, brought difficulties and

¹ *Crisis*, Vol. I., pp. 146, 149, 155.

disaster on the parent Institution. William Bromley, the proprietor of the premises, had handed them over rent free to Owen for the use of the Institution throughout the year 1832, with the option of purchase at the end of that time. By what motives he was actuated it is difficult now to say, since we are almost wholly dependent on the *ex parte* statements of Owen and his friends. But I am inclined to think, from Bromley's letters included in the Manchester Correspondence, that he genuinely admired Owen, and believed in the system, and was not looking solely, or perhaps even mainly, to possible future profits for himself. But he was not rich enough, or enthusiastic enough, to stand out of his rent indefinitely. He appears indeed to have been pressed for money. The Institution had already paid six months' ground rent (£160) for the premises, and Owen out of his own pocket had paid to Bromley £700 for the fixtures in the hall. But the Exchange was now doing an enormous and apparently profitable business, and Bromley not unreasonably asked that from the New Year they should either purchase the premises or pay him a fair rent for them. The rent asked was £1,400, exclusive of the ground rent (£320). Owen appears to have thought the rent too high. He failed to come to terms with Bromley before the end of the year, and, in the event, the Exchange was forced to quit the premises early in January at a few days' notice. The business was transferred to the Surrey Branch, whilst Bromley advertised that the Gray's Inn Road premises would be reopened as "The National Land and Equitable Exchange Company."

One at least of the original proprietors of the National

Equitable Labour Exchange — McConnell — defended Bromley's action in the matter, and threw in his lot with the new Company.

If we regard the matter simply as a business transaction we must find, I think, not that Bromley was unfairly smart but that Owen was marvellously negligent. But to one at least of the parties it never did present itself as a business transaction. To Owen, wholly occupied in preparing the way for the now imminent millennium, there came an offer of friendly help. Why should he hesitate to accept it? or why should he take thought for legal agreements or pounds, shillings and pence? His great undertaking was already realising, or would shortly realise, enough profit with which to pay off the entire sum demanded; and in any case, no man of common sense would trouble about money, when money and all that appertained to money was so soon to be swept away altogether.¹

During the first few months of 1833 the Blackfriars Branch continued to transact business, showing a weekly turnover of about 12,000-14,000 hours. But the business of the main Exchange was temporarily suspended. In a few weeks, however, Owen succeeded in securing new premises at 14, Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square,

¹ In his earlier letters to Owen, Bromley signs himself "Your faithful disciple"; and his letters throughout read like those of a straightforward man. There is still preserved in the Manchester Collection an agreement between Robert Owen and Bromley, bearing date March 10, 1832, under which Bromley undertakes to sell the premises with all fittings for £17,700, to be paid as soon as the Association can raise the money. If the money were not paid before January 1, 1833, Bromley was to be at liberty to sell or otherwise dispose of the property. It should be added that though no rent was actually paid, the year was not altogether unprofitable to Bromley. As mentioned in the text, half the ground rent for the year had been paid, and Owen paid £700 for fixtures, most of which apparently

and thither the business of the parent Exchange was transferred in May. The Exchange, however, seems to have been handicapped in its fresh start: and early in July it was announced that the undertaking would be transferred to a new management.¹ There had been formed, apparently in the early part of 1833,² a United Trades Association. The Societies which had joined the Association up to the beginning of May, 1833, comprised carpenters, shoemakers, painters, glaziers, cabinet- and chair-makers, hatters, tailors, brushmakers, brasswork founders, sawyers, and some others.³ The main object of these Societies, as explained in a report dated May 1, was to give employment to their out-of-work members. "Part of the funds of the Society [*i.e.* the individual Trade Society, not the Association] as at present raised by weekly loans of a shilling each member, is apportioned to the purchasing of material

remained in the hall when the Exchange was removed; and there were various alterations and repairs. The following account, undated, which appears in the Manchester Correspondence apparently relates to the *Gray's Inn Road* premises:—

| | | <i>Institution.</i> | | | |
|------------------------|-----|--|-------------------------------|--|--|
| <i>Dr.</i> | | £ | Cr. | | £ |
| To Loans, viz.— | | | By fixtures | | 700 |
| R. Owen, about | 900 | | „ lamps | | 300 |
| Charles Green | 350 | | „ other personal property ... | | 500 |
| Derby | 100 | | „ rent paid in advance ... | | 160 |
| Sundries | 650 | | „ repairs, sunk, say ... | | 540 |
| Labour Exchange | 200 | | | | |
| | | <hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/> £2,200 <hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/> | | | <hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/> £2,200 <hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/> |

¹ *Crisis*, Vol. II., p. 216.

² The first weekly meeting of Delegates reported in *The Crisis* is that for April 4, 1833. But this was not the first meeting of the Committee (*Crisis*, Vol. II., p. 105).

³ *Crisis*, Vol. II., p. 139.

at the wholesale market, procuring shop room, &c. The unemployed are then kept constantly at work. The goods they produce are sent to the Bazaar [probably the Bazaar at 19, Greville Street] there to be valued by persons elected by the Societies from among themselves." The men then received, in notes, or partly in notes and partly in cash, the value of their labour. From the weekly reports of the Delegates' Committee of the Association, it would appear that so long as the Labour Exchange furnished a ready market for their produce or the different Societies were able to exchange the products of their labour direct, they were able to find abundant work for their unemployed members. Thus on April 24 the Surrey Society (apparently a Society of mixed trades) reported that they had made a quantity of clothes for which they had received in exchange a quantity of leather; that they were going to build a workshop for the hatters, and were about to repair several houses, for which they were to receive coals in exchange. The Second Carpenters reported on July 4 that they had engaged to fit up a shop for the shoemakers, who had promised shoes in exchange. In fact on July 11 they reported that they had received shoes to the value of £4 12s.¹

But naturally the main business of the Societies was transacted not by direct barter with each other, but through the medium of the Bazaar, and later of the Labour Exchange. Thus the delegates of the First Carpenters report on June 27 that in the preceding week they had received in cash £3 1s. 8½d., in notes 502 hours, and had found employment for 12 of their members,

¹ *Crisis*, Vol. II., p. 224.

who had worked altogether 38 days 6 hours. The Second Carpenters had employed five members for 167 hours.¹ A week later the Third Carpenters reported that they had been founded for two years and had a quantity of useful articles—sashes, doors, ladders, &c.—for disposal. The Tailors reported that they had more work than their members could undertake.²

The quarterly report of the First Carpenters (April-June) shows stock in hand of £78 18s.; total expenditure in labour, etc., £120; labour performed by out-of-work members for the Society, 325 days 9½ hours.³ A few weeks later the First Carpenters reported that they had more work than their members could undertake, and offered to give employment to outsiders.⁴

It was natural that these Societies, which formed no doubt the chief customers of the Exchange, should be entrusted with the management of the undertaking. The requisite organisation for the purpose already existed in the Committee of Delegates from the several Societies which had for some time past met weekly, occasionally under Owen's presidency.

As a first step towards the new régime an audit was taken of the affairs of the Exchange. The audit—the result of which was announced at a meeting held on July 17—revealed a deficiency in stock of 9,000 hours (=£225), due mainly, as Owen supposed, to loss by theft during the hurried departure from the Gray's Inn Road premises. Owen explained that he was unable to meet the whole deficiency himself, as he had already expended

¹ *Crisis*, Vol. II., p. 205.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 134, 270.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 283.

all his available means in starting the original Exchange,¹ but he surrendered notes to the value of 1600 hours. About 900 hours were subscribed by other persons in the room. The new management then undertook to make arrangements for the gradual redemption of the old notes still outstanding.

The accounts for the first quarter (ending November 2, 1833) under the new management showed good results. The deposits amounted to 137,750 hours; the exchanges to 91,550, showing a balance of 46,200 hours. The total stock in hand, including the old stock, amounted to 58,900 hours, and the notes in circulation to 37,250 hours; so that there was a substantial balance on the right side. Moreover, the quarterly account of revenue and expenditure showed a profit of about £300.

| <i>Receipts.</i> | | <i>Expenditure.</i> | |
|-------------------------|--------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Provisions | £1,429 | Provisions | £1,115 |
| Rent, subscriptions ... | 67 | Rent | 148 |
| Festivals and lectures | 287 | Charges | 134 |
| Commissions | 243 | Festivals and lectures | 85 |
| | | Wages | 259 |
| | <hr/> | | <hr/> |
| | £2,026 | | £1,741 ² |
| | <hr/> | | <hr/> |

Over £200 of this profit, however, it will be seen, is derived from lectures and festivals, the entire receipts from which were made over to the committee by Owen. But the business proper is shown to be just self-supporting, which is all perhaps that could fairly be required. The deposits, it will be seen, averaged a little over 10,000 hours a week.

¹ His total expenditure according to his own statement (*New Moral World*, Vol. I., p. 401) amounted to over £2,500.

² *Crisis*, Vol. III., p. 96.

The report for the week ending January 25, 1834, shows a sadly diminished business; the deposits numbered only 5,284 hours for the week, and the exchanges 4,468. But the stock in hand, 54,852 hours, shows a surplus of nearly 23,000 hours over the notes in circulation. A second quarterly account is promised, but delayed in order to admit of a proper stock-taking.¹ The second quarterly account never appeared, nor is the result of the stock-taking expressly stated. But in the following April² we have an account for the two months from February 1 to March 29, 1834, which shows a business shrinking at an accelerated rate. For the eight weeks the deposits amounted to only 19,223 hours, or less than 2,500 a week. During the same period the exchanges aggregated 25,148 hours. The stock in hand has shrunk from 54,800 to 34,443 hours, and shows now a surplus of about 8,000 hours only over notes. The undertaking is just saved from bankruptcy by the festivals and lectures, which again furnish a net profit of nearly £200. Groceries, it is noted, are now on sale at one-fourth notes and three-fourths cash. Early in August, 1834, an advertisement appears in *The Crisis*,³ asking for provisions of all kinds and various other articles to be delivered at the Association of the Industrious Classes, 14, Charlotte Street. No further notice of the undertaking appears in the pages of *The Crisis*. But two letters preserved amongst the Manchester Correspondence throw considerable light on the internal working of the Exchange.

¹ *Crisis*, Vol. III., p. 216.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. IV., p. 24

³ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

Owen, who was absent in November, 1833, in the north of England on a lecturing tour on behalf of the Association, had written to S. Austin, originally Secretary of the Gray's Inn Road Institution, and apparently at this time an official of the Exchange under the new management, and also Owen's agent in his dealings with the Committee of the Exchange, to send him some money. Austin replies on the twentieth of the month that the Travelling Committee has at present no funds in hand; that the committee (*sc.* of the Labour Exchange) stopped payment last week, and have left him to pay a number of minor accounts for printing, etc., as best he could; further that they now dispute the terms of the agreement with Owen, and wish to back out of part of their payment to him for rent, etc. Last of all, Austin proceeds: "I should not have minded if the Committee had not stopped paying me, and they ought not to have done it, for the lectures and festivals have paid them nearly £100 (including notes), more than they would have paid me if they had acted up to their agreement. I have been determined, however, not to have anything disagreeable with them, and have therefore only stated the difficulties and urged them to make good their agreements."

On June 7, 1834, Austin writes to Owen that the affairs of the Exchange are in a very bad way:

"From the account now furnished, however, it appears that all the money which has been collected in every way has been expended, and that there remains a considerable debt, and as they are now entered upon the last quarter of the year during which it has been agreed they should hold the premises, perhaps they cannot do

better than call together their constituents, if they have any left, and state to them that, after having devoted their time and talents in the endeavour to make the Exchange succeed, they find there has been lost in the attempt no less a sum than £500, and therefore they purpose that the Notes should be all called in, all the claims paid off, and the whole concern wound up as soon as possible; that they may be able to fulfill their agreement with you, to pay the Rent in sums of not less than £10 per week until the whole amount be paid, and at the end of the year deliver up the Premises to you in good and substantial repair."

In conclusion he urges Owen to take immediate steps to insist on a full account being rendered, and the strict fulfilment of the committee's engagements, since, he writes, the public are profoundly dissatisfied with the bad management of the committee, and the members of the committee are at variance with each other.

The rest is silence.

There is silence also over the ending of the numerous other Labour Exchanges of this period, and it is probable that all alike ended in disaster—with one exception. The Birmingham Branch of the National Equitable Labour Exchange was opened in July, 1833, with Robert Owen as Governor and Charles West as Secretary. It was carried on with more or less success until the middle of the following year and then, apparently owing to lack of support, it was resolved to wind up the affairs. In the result the whole of the debts and the original share capital were repaid and a surplus of £8 3s. 0½*d.* was handed over to the Birmingham General Hospital.¹

¹ The accounts are preserved in the Manchester Correspondence.

The chief causes of the failure of the Bazaars and Labour Exchanges of the period, according to William Lovett, who had himself for some months acted as store-keeper to the First London Association, were "religious differences, the want of legal security, and the dislike which the women had to confine their dealings to one shop. The question of religion was not productive of much dissension until Mr. Owen's return from America, when his Sunday morning lectures excited the alarm of the religious portion of the members, and caused great numbers to secede from them. The want of legal security was also a cause of failure, as they could not obtain the ordinary legal redress when their officers or servants robbed or defrauded them; the Magistrates refused to interfere on the ground of their not being legalised or enrolled Societies. The prejudice of the members' wives against their Stores was no doubt another cause of failure. Whether it was their love of shopping, or their dislike that their husbands should be made acquainted with the exact extent of their dealings, which were booked against them, I know not, but certain it was that they often left the unadulterated and genuine article in search of what was often questionable."¹

Lovett goes on to state that "when Mr. Owen first came over from America he looked somewhat coolly on these Trading Associations, and very candidly declared that the mere buying and selling formed no part of his grand Co-operative scheme."

In an autobiographical fragment written a year or two after the collapse of the Exchange, which reads almost

¹ Lovett, *Autobiography*, pp. 42, 43.

like a reply to Lovett's book, Owen defended his action in lecturing on Sunday as being the only day on which the working classes could conveniently attend. Further, he explains that it was not his own wish to start a Labour Exchange at the time and in the manner chosen. The experiment was forced upon him by impatient friends who were not sufficiently experienced or farsighted to realise that long and careful preparation was needed to ensure the success of such an enterprise.¹

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. I., pp. 396, 401.

CHAPTER XVIII

TRADE UNIONS AND REFORM

HIS advocacy and support of the Labour Exchanges formed but a small part of Owen's multifarious activities during the years 1830-34. Of the Co-operative Congresses, which, beginning at Manchester in May, 1831, continued thereafter for several years to hold half-yearly meetings at different large towns in England, we have already spoken. At most of these meetings Owen either presided or otherwise took a leading part in the proceedings. Moreover from 1830 onwards, he, William Pare, and other prominent co-operators made periodical lecturing tours, chiefly in the north of England, to confirm the faithful and to spread the good news amongst the unconverted.

But Owen's lectures were by no means confined to the provinces. In the years 1830 and 1831 he held several public meetings, in the "Freemasons' Tavern" and other public halls, at which he delivered addresses on the prevailing distress and the remedy offered by Co-operation. At a meeting held on October 5, 1830, he spoke, by exception, on the state of the Public Press.¹ In September, 1831, he was inviting Members of Parliament

¹ For notices of these meetings see *British Co-operator* (1830), pp. 29 and 146, and the Manchester Correspondence.

and others to serve on a committee for alleviating the distress then prevalent in Ireland. In 1830 he offered to lecture to the Royal Institution and to the Literary and Scientific Institution: both bodies politely declined the proposal. In June of the same year Bentley writes declining to undertake the publication of a book offered him by Owen, probably the *Lectures on an Entire New State of Society*, which were actually published this year by J. Brooks, an obscure printer in Oxford Street.

But Owen found full opportunity for expounding his views in the lectures on Sunday mornings which at this time formed a marked feature in his propaganda. In the first instance these lectures were delivered at the Mechanics' Institution, Southampton Buildings, apparently in connection with the "British Association for promoting Co-operative Knowledge," which had been founded in 1829. But this use of the Sunday proved obnoxious to some of the members, and Owen was forced to remove successively to the Sans Souci Institution, Leicester Square, to the Burton Street Chapel, Burton Crescent, and to the Bazaar in the Gray's Inn Road.¹ Meanwhile, however, a development of another kind was taking place. The British Association contained a number of working men and others who were more democratic than Owen and his middle-class followers. These men appear for the most part to have listened sympathetically to Owen's teachings: many of them, indeed, like Lovett and Hetherington, no doubt owed their first introduction to public life to the Co-operative Movement. But reforms

¹ *New Moral World* Vol. I., p. 395.

were in the air, and the working-class element in Owen's London audiences were naturally drawn off into political propaganda. Lovett has told us how the "British Association for promoting Co-operative Knowledge" developed first into the "Metropolitan Trades Union" and then, in 1831, into the "National Union of the Working Classes and Others," a body which included amongst its objects "An Effectual Reform of the Commons House of Parliament" and "the repeal of all bad laws."¹

Owen of course never had any sympathy with political reforms as such : there is scarcely an allusion in his correspondence at this period to the Reform agitation. In his view, held consistently throughout his life, it was waste of labour to tinker at an obsolete constitutional machinery which the new moral order must so soon sweep into oblivion. But the National Union included in its ranks many friends and followers of his own : and he seems still to have maintained some connection with them, and to have been regarded by those outside as closely associated with their objects. The Union met at a hall in the Blackfriars Bridge Road called the Rotunda, which subsequently, under the name of the "Surrey Institution," became the home of the Surrey Branch Labour Exchange, as we have already seen. The rather noisy Radicals who met at the Rotunda, inspired partly by the Socialist doctrine of labour as the only source of wealth and Owen's teaching of the imminent advent of a new order of society, partly by the hope of political reform, became an object of terror alike to the more constitutional Radicals and to the Conservative and re-

¹ Lovett, *Autobiography*, p. 68 ; Wallas's *Life of Place*, pp. 269-72.

spectable classes generally. Place speaks of them as "loud and long talkers, vehement, resolute, reckless rascals";¹ and the *Times*, in its issue of March 28, 1831, publishes, under the heading "A hint to the Parish Officers for indicting the Rotunda as a disorderly house," an extract from a statute of George III. prescribing heavy penalties for opening a public debate on Sunday, to which admission was obtained by payment.

The ties between Owen and the Rotundanists, however, which appear at no time to have been very close, were soon to be relaxed still further as the movement of the working classes developed on political and democratic lines. Owen, in short, though he may have been at one time among their prophets, never became in any effective sense their leader. In fact he found his most convinced and most persistent followers at this time amongst the social strata just above the working classes. The "Association of the Intelligent and Well-disposed of the Industrious Classes for removing Ignorance and Poverty"—for such was the name of the body under whose auspices *The Crisis* was started in the spring of 1832—was essentially a middle-class organisation. The annual subscription to the Institution in the Gray's Inn Road, a guinea and upwards, was such as few working men could afford to pay. The price of the tickets for the monthly, which soon became weekly, festivals—3s., or 1s. 6d. to members—was clearly suited to the pockets of the comparatively well-to-do. And dancing, which formed a prominent item in the programme at the Institution, would at that time of national distress

¹ Wallas, *Op. cit.*, p. 273

and strenuous political activity have appealed to the British working man even less than at the present day.¹

Owen's aloofness from all the popular movements for liberty and constitutional reform can be traced to two main sources. In the first place he was aristocratic in his methods and the whole cast of his mind. He appears always to have conceived of reform as something imposed upon the mass of the people from above: throughout a life spent in the midst of a prolonged and partially successful struggle on the part of the people for liberty and political power, Owen never adequately realised the possibilities of a spontaneous movement for social betterment. This defect was no doubt proximately due to his own personal success as a master manufacturer in imposing a new moral order on his subordinates. But the true cause lay deeper; in Owen's conviction that there must be a radical change in circumstances, and that mankind must be made all over again, before there could be any hope of real and permanent reform; and in his inability to perceive that the most valuable of all forms of education is that self-education which men win for themselves in their struggles for freedom.

But in the second place Owen was too thorough-

¹ In a letter dated May 10, 1832 (Manchester Correspondence), W. King, writing from the Gothic Hall, deprecates the appearance of opposition to Owen. But he (King) is satisfied that the field is wide enough for both:—"Mr. Owen has now in full operation at Gray's Inn Road his useful lecturing Department—we hear he has friends enough to aid him in his *Dancing* Department, and we thought we could very well be spared to endeavour to do something in the Labour Department." There are other allusions in the Manchester Correspondence to the dancing.

going an idealist to submit to compromise of any kind. His social ideals were bound up with his religious views. He could tolerate no half-measures, none of the temporary shifts, the nice adjustments of means to ends, the give-and-take policy, which are essential to ordinary political or social reform. Owen could never rest content in a half-way house. He saw everything *sub specie eternitatis*—the eternal perfection as he conceived it. With an outlook of this kind, and the most absolute confidence in his own judgment, it will be readily understood that he found it difficult to work with others, and that others in turn were apt to find him self-willed, visionary and impracticable.

Thus in June, 1831, John Gray,¹ author of a *Lecture on Human Happiness*, and one of the little band of thinkers of this date to whom we owe the formulation of the Socialist creed, writes to the secretary of the London Co-operative Society—in other words to the official exponent of Owen's system :

“I received three or four days since a printed circular, entitled ‘*Outlines of the Rational System of Society*,’ detailing the moderate number of seventy-eight propositions, upon which I take it for granted mankind are to agree previous to the commencement of that new era when ‘*Moral and Physical evil*’ are to be no more.

¹ On August 5, 1823, Gray had written to Owen that, being about to publish a work on Political Economy, “it has been a matter of some surprise to me to learn that at the “*City of London Tavern*” last week the same ideas were in some instances expressed almost in the same words by you, as I had written twelve months before.” Fearing therefore to be accused of plagiarism, he writes to Owen to learn more of his views.

“I view with unfeigned regret a Society, now numerous and powerful, if I am rightly informed, pursuing with unabated energy the phantoms of theology, and endeavouring to make converts to unpopular religious or moral creeds the millions of Society who are now and ever ready to embark their persons and property in any practical and practicable method of improving their condition.

“What has the eternal doctrine of ‘necessity’ to do with roast beef? Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions; fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian? And will not a Jew *work* that he may eat? Assuredly he will. Teach him then to do the work that he may eat instead of working that others may eat for him. You do not understand your own principles, else you never would have divided into seventy-eight parts that which may be put into a nutshell.”

He concludes his letter by wishing his correspondent a happy deliverance “from the religious mania with which you are at present afflicted.”¹

Owen’s religious—or anti-religious—views, and his constant advocacy of them in season and out of season, formed, it may be said, a serious stumbling-block to his followers and well-wishers throughout his later career.

Again, the leaders of the National Political Union, which was founded at Birmingham chiefly through the

¹ Manchester Collection, letter of June 18, 1831.

agency of Attwood, the Radical banker, in 1831, to press forward the Reform Bill, were anxious that Owen, and all that Owen represented, should join with them. The secretary writes to Owen in April, 1832, to ask for a "short summary" of his opinions—a thing at no period of Owen's life within the bounds of the possible—and mentions that there were already seven thousand members in the Union. In the following month William Pare writes to urge upon Owen the importance of making the Gray's Inn Road Institution of a more popular character, on the model of the Political Union; and Bronterre O'Brien, the well-known Chartist, writes at length to the same purport:—

"To you who know human nature so well, and whose writings afford abundant evidence that you are as well conversant with the nature of existing governments, I need not say that these governments have ultimately no other basis of support than public opinion. Be they ever so complicated or simple, be they monarchical or Republican, they stand or fall, move retrograde or forward, solely in obedience to Public Opinion. It is therefore of vital importance to gather up this Public Opinion, to concentrate it on the social system and make it bear irresistibly on the government, by the weight, unity of direction, and simultaneous action of all its parts. With this view I respectfully suggest that the Association in Gray's Inn Road should be made of a more popular character. I would in fact recommend you to take the Birmingham Union as your model so far as organisation is concerned. . . . I would admit all persons as members who paid 1s. per quarter or

upwards, in order to secure the attendance of great numbers of the working classes at the lectures, council meetings, etc. I conceive that by proper arrangements you might get from five to ten thousand members. . . . If these and like duties [*i.e.* of the Council of the Association] were performed judiciously, and your own peculiar opinions on Religion, Responsibility, etc., kept in the background, at least for a short time, I believe we could very soon, to use the language of Mr. Attwood, roll up such a massive power, such a giant strength, as would be perfectly irresistible.

“I have said, my dear Sir, that I think the present time most auspicious. I think so because the suffering and deluded people are fast recovering their senses, sick and weary as they are of Public meetings, Reform discussions, Speechmaking and all that sort of thing; there are already hundreds, perhaps thousands in this very town,¹ who have wit enough to perceive that this boasted Reform Bill will not bring them the good they once expected from it. As respects my allusion to religion, responsibility, etc., I beg you to understand me not as pleading indulgence for my own prejudices, but for those of others. If I mistake not, your ideas and my own are the same, or nearly so, on these subjects—but the people, the unhappy, the ignorant, the debasingly superstitious people are *frightfully sensitive* and, if you like, *insane* on these points.”²

It is perhaps hardly necessary to say that, in spite

¹ Birmingham.

² Manchester Collection, letter of May 27, 1832.

of the adroit compliment with which the letter opens, the appeal was unsuccessful.

In September of the same year we find articles in Bronterre O'Brien's paper, the *Poor Man's Guardian*, complaining that Owen and the leading co-operators were not in favour of enlarged political rights for the masses ; "they seek every opportunity to speak sneeringly and contemptuously of their possession as a consideration of no value." The writer went on to maintain that this was not only bad policy on the part of the co-operators, but a dishonest attempt to try to win favour with the aristocracy by depreciating the rights of man. The attempt was bound to fail because the ruling classes would never yield to anything but political pressure. Owen might be assured that "the Government will not interfere with his plans so long as they promise to be impotent for good or evil : but let fortune once favour him—let success once smile on his endeavours—let what is now 'visionary and chimerical' once become of practical benefit to the workmen at the expense of the upper and middle classes, and then we shall soon see whether Mr. Owen's disciples will not find to their sorrow what it is not to have a parliament of the people."

O'Brien himself found it necessary to defend Owen from the charge of being in collusion with the Government, or having any personal ambition to serve in his attempt to divert popular attention from Radicalism to Co-operation. Owen, he says, is unquestionably honest, but mistaken. Let Owenites, instead of pursuing a vain dream, join with the Radicals in securing political rights for the mass of the people, and thus "help to

establish for the workman dominion over the fruit of his own industry.”¹

In the *Guardian* of September 22 is an account of a debate held at the Gray's Inn Road Institution between the Owenites and the National Political Union of the Working Classes, on Co-operation *versus* Political Rights as a means of immediately benefiting the working classes, at which Hetherington and Cleave were the chief speakers on behalf of the National Political Union.

Owen's attitude to another popular movement at this time shows his inability to work for a half-way measure. He could not submit to accept the millennium in instalments. There had been from 1830 onwards a strong and well-organised agitation led by Richard Oastler, John Doherty, G. S. Bull, and in Parliament by Sadler and Fielden, for a ten hours' day for factory operatives. But Owen was impatient at the slow progress of an agitation conducted on constitutional lines ; already the movement had gone on for more than three years, and Parliament had not yet consented to enforce even a ten hours' day.² He announced a meeting at Manchester for November 25, 1833, in favour of an eight hours' day, and invited Oastler and others to attend. Oastler in his reply, dated

¹ *Poor Man's Guardian*, 1st and 20th of September, 1832. The *Guardian* represented at this time the movement which afterwards became known as the Chartist movement. The four leading points, as enumerated in the issues from which the quotations in the text are made, were Universal Suffrage, Short Parliaments, Voting by Ballot, and abolition of property qualification.

² Hobhouse's Bill, as passed in 1831, limited the hours for young persons to twelve a day ; and Sadler's Ten Hours' Bill, introduced in the shortlived Parliament of 1831-2, had failed to get beyond a Select Committee.

November 22 (Manchester Correspondence), declines the invitation:—

“We are of opinion that our attending at Manchester on Monday evening would do harm instead of good. We have no delegated powers. Our Delegates’ Meeting sanctioned the 10 hours’ Bill, and our Local Committees have done the same, and the only power to alter (as stated at Mr. Bull’s on Monday), rests with the Public Meeting. If we were to turn aside from the resolutions of the Delegates’ and Committee meetings, we should deservedly lose the confidence of the operatives. . . . I shall never argue against an 8 hours’ bill, I have often declared 8 hours long enough, to the people at Public Meetings. I still think so, and that children ought not to work at all. But the people must drive me by the majorities at Public Meetings from the 10 to the 8 hours’ Bill.”

The meeting was nevertheless duly held, and there was formed a “Society for promoting National Regeneration,” whose object was to secure an eight hours’ day for all classes, with the same amount of wages as that paid for the present day’s work. Owen himself was convinced that the desired object could be obtained by mutual agreement between the men and the masters, and was confident of his ability to convince the employers that their true interest lay in compliance. The committee of the new organisation included, besides Owen, John Fielden, M.P., John Doherty, Hodgetts, Philip Grant, and others who had already taken a prominent part in the agitation for shorter hours. A resolution was passed urging Oastler, Wood, Bull and

Sadler to drop the ten-hour project and unite forces with the newly formed Society, and Owen was requested to form branches in the towns which he was to visit in the course of his lecturing tour.¹

Branches were actually established in London, Sheffield, Bradford, and elsewhere. But the movement effected little; Oastler and Bull for sufficient reasons declined to join; the Trade Unions showed a certain jealousy of Owen's interference;² and finally Ebenezer Elliott and four other members of the Sheffield Branch addressed in January, 1834, a remarkable Memorial to Owen, in which they explained in temperate language their reasons for declining any longer to co-operate with him. The Memorial begins with a warm tribute to Owen's personal qualities:—

“KIND AND DEAR SIR,

“You came amongst us—a rich man amongst the poor—and did not call us rabble. This was a phenomenon new to us. There were no sneers on your lips, no covert scorn in the tones of your voice; you met us as a fortunate brother ought to meet his affectionate but suffering brethren.”

The Memorial then proceeds to argue, first, that the prime necessity of the working classes is cheap food—the abolition of the Corn Laws. Second, that a wholesale reduction in the hours of labour must inevitably lead to a reduction of wages:—“It is impossible to get the same wage for eight hours' labour

¹ *Crisis*, Vol. III., p. 117.

² *Ibid.*, p. 126.

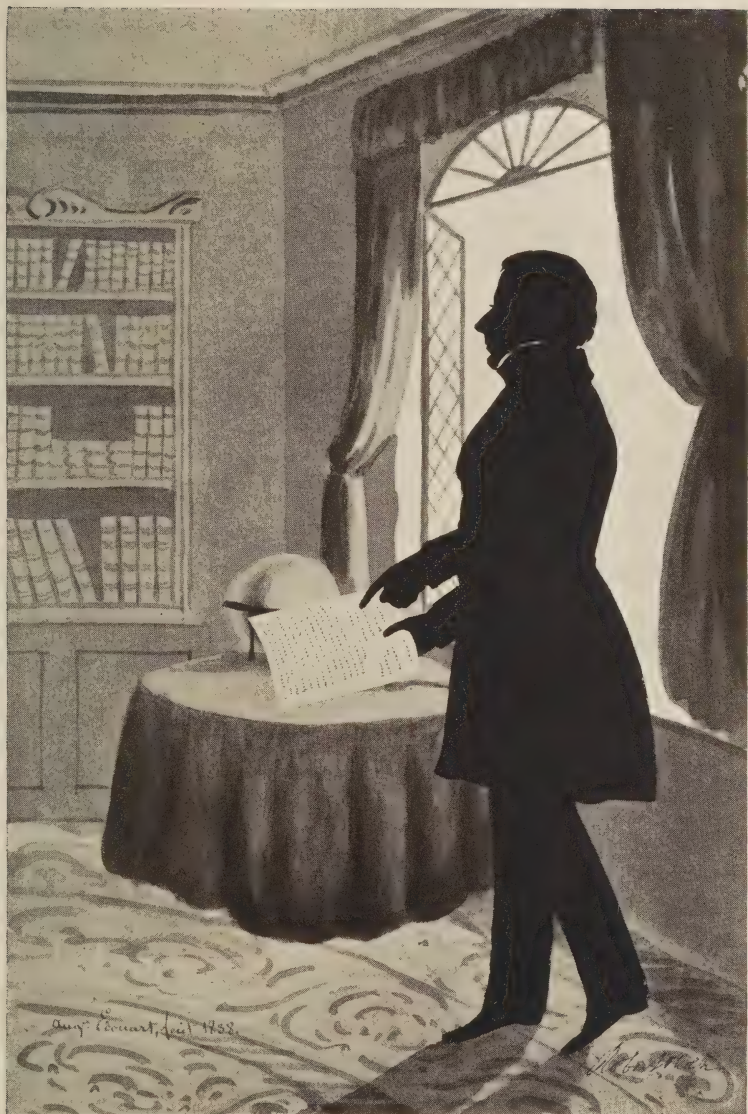
as for 12, without robbery of some kind," or, which would be equally disastrous, a greatly enhanced price. "You tell us that your object is to compel idlers who consume wealth to pay a higher price than they do now for our productions. But you do not tell us how we can compel purchasers to buy our goods dear, when they can buy other goods cheap"—abroad.

In a word Owen's diagnosis of the evil was faulty, and his suggested remedy, if practicable, would only aggravate the disease.

After this manifesto the National Regeneration Society appears to have passed into oblivion.¹

One more illustration may perhaps be given of Owen's methods of public work. Lovett tells us that, prior to the meeting of the Third Co-operative Congress, which was held in London, at the Gray's Inn Road Institution, in May, 1832, a circular was issued inviting the attendance of Members of Parliament and others. "Mr. Owen having seen a copy of the circular drawn up conceived that it did not sufficiently express his peculiar views. He therefore sent an amendment, which he wished added to it, on to our meeting by Mr. J. D. Styles. The Committee having discussed the amendment rejected it, and then sent the circular on to Mr. Hetherington's to be printed. When Mr. Owen heard of that, he sent Mr. Bromley, the proprietor of the Exchange Bazaar, to tell Mr. Hetherington that his amendment must be added. This at first Mr. Hetherington refused to do, but on Bromley swearing that the Congress

¹ The Memorial, which originally appeared in the *Sheffield Iris*, is reprinted in *The Crisis* for February 1, 1834 (Vol. III., pp. 186, 187).



From an unpublished drawing by A. Edouart, by permission of the Charity Organisation Society.

ROBERT OWEN. 1838.

should not meet at his place unless he did add it, he began to think it a very serious affair, as the meeting was to take place in a few days : we had incurred great expenses, and had no means of taking another place. He therefore told Bromley that if Mr. Owen wrote him a letter authorising him to insert it, and took the blame on himself, he would add the amendment. Judge therefore of our great surprise when the circulars were brought to our meeting embodying the rejected amendment. After Hetherington's explanation it was resolved that a deputation consisting of Messrs. Lovett, Flather and Powell be appointed to go and expostulate with Mr. Owen. We went, and were shown into Mr. Owen's room at the Bazaar, and after briefly introducing our business, he told us to be seated, as he had something very important to read to us. This something was the proof of a publication just started, called *The Crisis*. After he had read to us a large portion of what he had written in it, I found my patience giving way, and at the next pause I took the opportunity of asking him what this had to do with the business we had come about ? I began by telling him of his having submitted an amendment to our circular, of the Committee's rejecting it by a large majority, and of his taking upon himself to authorise its insertion in the circular notwithstanding : and concluded by asking him whether such conduct was not highly despotic. With the greatest composure he answered that it evidently was despotic : but as we, as well as the Committee that sent us, were all ignorant of his plans, and of the objects he had in view, we must consent to be ruled by despots till we had acquired sufficient knowledge to govern

ourselves. After such vain-glorious avowal, what could we say but to report—in the phraseology of one of the Deputation—that we had been flabbergasted by him.”¹

But one important phase of Owen's activities during these years remains to be dealt with. As we have seen, there had sprung up under the influence of his teaching a large number of Societies of working men. Originally founded as nurseries for future communists, many of these Societies at the time at which we have now arrived, 1832 and onwards, had become simply small trading groups, or small groups of producers, associated together for their own immediate benefit, and especially to provide work for those of their number who might be out of employment and relief for the sick. In other words they discharged the functions now performed by the sick and benefit funds of a Trade Union. Gradually, too, they had changed their type. At the outset the Co-operative Societies had been miscellaneous associations of men of different trades. But as time went on, and the millennium delayed its coming, it was found more convenient and more immediately profitable for members of one trade to associate together; and as we have seen in the previous chapter, most of the Societies represented in the United Trades Association consisted of individuals belonging to the same trade—carpenters, tailors, cabinet-makers, etc. These Trade Unions, for such in fact they were, had in London, under the immediate influence of Owen's pacific teaching, pursued for the most part a non-aggressive policy. But the years 1832-4 were full of wars and rumours of wars in the industrial

¹ Lovett's *Autobiography*, pp. 48, 49.

world. The Reform Bill had passed into law, but had failed to bring with it an appreciable instalment of the millennium ; and much of the popular energy which had been engaged in securing the triumphal passage of the Bill was now diverted into militant Trade Unionism. Though Owen himself always looked for a peaceful settlement of all industrial crises by means of an equitable understanding between masters and men, it is probable that his teachings were largely responsible for the aggressive attitude of the working classes during these years. The doctrine of labour as the only source and measure of wealth, a doctrine embodied by him in the concrete form of labour notes, and continually emphasised by the sharp distinction drawn by the Owenites between the productive and the non-productive, —if occasionally industrious—classes, formed the basis of all working-class reasoning in economic subjects at this time.¹

The militant Trade Union movement of 1832-4 owed therefore much of its original impulse to Owen. Moreover, many who had received their original training in public affairs as co-operators in one or other Owenite Society became afterwards prominent in the Trade Union movement. And Owen himself made a bold attempt to capture the whole movement at the outset of the strikes of 1833, and to direct the energies of

¹ Amongst the Manchester Correspondence is the rough draft of a Catechism for use at the founding of the Metropolitan Auxiliary Lodge of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union. One of the questions in this document runs: "Do you fully acknowledge that labour is the source of all wealth? And that those who labour have an unimpeachable right to secure to themselves, and for their own disposal, all its benefits and advantages?"

the unionists into the peaceful channels of co-operation. Pare, Styles and other Co-operative missionaries were constantly on tour through the provinces at this time, lecturing and generally advancing the propaganda. The Manchester Correspondence of 1833-4 contains many letters from Owen's followers at Birmingham, Manchester, Worcester and elsewhere relating their efforts to convert the nascent Unions to their faith, and urging Owen to come down in person to help the cause. Thus G. Marshall writes from

"MANCHESTER, *July 6th*, 1833.

"DEAR SIR,

"We think it highly important that you should contrive to visit Manchester with the least delay, for your Lectures at this time will doubtless have more effect than they would have had at an earlier period, and perhaps such a favourable opportunity of making converts may not offer again in our time.

"You are aware that the trades unions are becoming almost established throughout the United Kingdom, and the fountain head of the Lodges is in Manchester; the Leaders in these Unions are partly co-operators, and they say they will obtain the Mechanics' Institution for you to lecture in, and that you shall have an impartial hearing if you will favour them with a lecture. The Trades Unions, I am told, receive more than £1,000 per week, they expended more than £100 last week in missionaries alone. The Joiners, Masons, Bricklayers, and indeed all connected with building are now out of work, and the Unions throughout are looking to Manchester; these parties are anxious to hear further on Labour exchange,

and have now leisure and inclination to acquire further information.

“ You may rely upon it that this is the best possible time for you to come out in Manchester ; you are highly respected here by those who think different to us, and we have here many active co-operators who are furnishing the leaders of the Unions with such knowledge as we possess on Labour exchange, ‘ The Crisis,’ &c.

“ GEORGE MARSHALL.”

Invitations to Owen to lecture were received in August of this year from the Liverpool Central Committee, and from the Grand Committee of the Manchester and Birmingham Delegates at Birmingham.

Again, W. Wilks writes from Worcester on August 16 relating his efforts to interest the Unions in Labour Exchanges : “ We waited upon the Shoemakers on Monday night last, and they are very eager to commence one, and intend to send shoes to Birmingham and have grindery in return, as soon as they have funds sufficient. After that we waited upon the Glove-cutters Union, who received us very favourably : some seemed to object to you on account of your Religion.”

The objection does not seem to have deterred the Glovemakers from embarking on a co-operative enterprise which shortly after ended in disaster ; for fifteen months later, on November 5, 1834, we have a letter from the same correspondent, intimating his intention to come to London to lay before Owen the whole affairs of the glove manufactory. The manufactory has now, it appears, been closed, the stock has been sold at a loss ; and £40 is still owing to Mr. Wilks, “ the particulars of

which I will show you when I come, as I know it is your wish that no individual shall meet with any pecuniary loss owing to the part he has taken in our cause."

In letters of about the same period from two Birmingham correspondents—Joseph Hansom and Edward Welch, both architects—we have a still more ambitious scheme adumbrated. There was at this time, the summer of 1833, an extensive strike amongst the building trades in Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester and elsewhere. The Owenite scheme in brief was that the men should themselves make and sell bricks, and undertake building contracts on their own account. Thus Hansom writes on August 18, 1833. ". . . There are 800 men at a rough guess concerned in the Manchester Strike. We calculate that 10s. per week per head would maintain them in work if a provision store be established from whence rations could be distributed to them for labour notes. . . . If they make their own bricks and could arrange with the Colliers' Union for coals to burn them with, little if any more of cash would be wanted than the £400 per week, and in one month so much of capital would be accumulated as would be worth at least 8 times the sum. Some idea of this is now sown in the minds of our 8 confederates of this morning, and from the avidity with which they received the principle I expect it to shoot out a wonderful tree in a few hours."

On the 23rd, after interviewing some delegates from the Manchester strikers and failing to persuade them, Hansom writes again, suggesting that the unionists at Birmingham should carry out the contract for building the

Grammar School there. Unfortunately, the Governors require securities to the extent of two-thirds of the amount of the contract—and the Owenites have no money to spare. “But the Governors,” he adds, “cannot carry on the work without us : either they must come to terms with the unionists or the works must be stopped.” A third course was found in the event. On August 24—the day following this letter—Messrs. Walthew, the principal builders in the town, discharged all their men who were members of the Union, and shortly afterwards took up the contract for building the Grammar School. On September 6, Edward Welch writes to Owen, stating these facts, and furnishing a copy of a manifesto, drawn up by himself, which he trusts the several lodges of the Union will adopt. This document, which was addressed to Mr. Walthew, ran as follows :—

“We the delegates of the several lodges of the Building Trades—elected for the purpose of correcting the abuses which have crept into the modes of undertaking and transacting business—do give you notice that you will receive no assistance from the working men in any of our bodies to enable you to fulfill an engagement which we understand you have entered into with the Governors of the Free Grammar School to erect a New School in New Street unless you comply with the following conditions.

“Aware that it is our labour alone that can carry into effect what you have undertaken we cannot but view ourselves as parties to your engagement, if that engagement is ever fulfilled ; and as you had no authority from us to make such an engagement, nor had you

any legitimate right to barter our labour at prices fixed by yourself, we call upon you to exhibit to our several bodies your detailed estimates of quantities and prices at which you have taken the work, and we call upon you to arrange with us a fixed per centage of profit for your own services in conducting the building, and in finding the material on which our labour is to be applied.

“Should we find upon examination that you have fixed equitable prices which will not only remunerate you for your superintendence but us for our toil, we have no objections upon a clear understanding to become parties to the contract ; and will see you through it, after your having entered yourself a member of our body, and after your having been duly *elected* to occupy the office you have *assumed*.”

It does not appear whether this manifesto was actually adopted by the Lodges : but it is sufficiently characteristic of the temper and reasoning of the Unionist pronouncements of this date. The Operative Tailors, in a circular dated April 25, 1834, announce to their employers that with a view to stay the ruinous effects of commercial competition they have resolved to introduce some new regulations into that trade, to come into operation on Monday next : the circular proceeds :—

“It only remains for me to add, that your workmen, members of this Society, will cease to be employed by you, should you decline to act upon the new Regulations ; and further, I think it right to apprize you that, in that case, they will no longer consider it necessary to support your interest, but will immediately enter upon

the arrangements prepared by the Society for the employment of such members for the benefit of the Society.”¹

As a matter of fact a Grand National Guild of Builders was actually founded and set to work on building a Guild Hall in Birmingham. On February 23, 1834, Hansom writes that the Guild Hall is nearly completed—the men have found the labour and Hansom himself has spent a considerable sum in materials. More he cannot afford, and he appeals to Owen to find the sum—about £500—still lacking to complete the work. Owen was apparently unable to help, and the building was eventually finished by the landlord, and still exists as a metal warehouse in Shadwell Street.²

But Owen was not content with the gradual conversion or permeation of the nascent Trade Unions. In the autumn of the year 1833 he outlined a scheme of a more ambitious kind. Lecturing at the Charlotte Street Institution on the evening of Sunday, October 6, he made the following portentous announcement: “I now give you a short outline of the great changes which are in contemplation and which shall come suddenly upon Society, like a thief in the night. . . . We have long since discovered that as long as Master contends with Master no improvement, either for man or master, will be possible: there is no other alternative, therefore, but national companies for every trade. . . . All trades shall first form associations or parochial lodges, to consist of a convenient number for carrying on the business.”

¹ Manchester Correspondence.

² Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 117; and Manchester Correspondence.

These parochial lodges should send delegates to county lodges, and so on up to the Grand National Council. "This is the outline for individual trades—they shall be arranged in companies or families: thus all those trades which relate to clothing shall form a company, such as tailors, shoemakers, hatters, milliners and mantua-makers; and all the different manufactures shall be arranged in a similar way; communications shall pass from the various departments to the grand national establishment in London. No secret shall be kept from public knowledge; any information respecting costs and profit shall be freely communicated, and that shall be done by a Gazette."¹ In a more detailed exposition of the scheme two or three days later to the Sixth Co-operative Congress, which met under his presidency at the Institution, Owen made it clear that he contemplated a Union not only of operatives, but also of masters and manufacturers, and ultimately of the Government itself.²

In effect there was founded early in 1834 under Owen's auspices, and apparently with Owen himself as Grand Master of Auxiliary Lodges, a "Grand National Consolidated Trades Union of Great Britain and Ireland," which in a few weeks' time is stated to have enrolled something between half a million and a million members.³ The Grand National, which caused profound alarm amongst the propertied classes, had but a brief career.

¹ *Crisis*, Vol. III., pp. 42, 43.

² *Crisis*, Vol. III., pp. 62, 63. To criticise this scheme from the standpoint of ordinary economics would be to break a butterfly upon a wheel. But any reader who desires it will find the economic fallacies of the scheme set out in Mr. Webb's *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 145 *seqq.*

³ *History of Trade Unionism*, pp. 120, 123; *Crisis* for February, 1834.

The conviction in March, 1834, of the six Dorsetshire labourers¹ united all the Unions for a time in a common protest against the shameful sentence. The Grand National organised a monster procession to present a petition against the sentence. The procession, some thirty thousand strong, marched, accompanied by Owen, to the Home Office on April 21, 1834, but Lord Melbourne refused to receive the deputation.² The effect produced by the energetic action of the Government did, no doubt, much to hasten the collapse of the movement. Some costly and unsuccessful strikes followed, and by the middle of 1834 many unionists longed for peace. On June 14 W. R. Wood, a prominent member of the Grand National, writes to Owen from Hanley suggesting that a letter from him to Simpson, an influential member of the Potters' Union, might at this juncture have the effect of bringing over the whole of that Union, eight thousand strong, to the cause of consolidation and Co-operation. The writer adds—

¹ The Unions of those days—as the name “Lodges” applied to the local branches testifies—were founded on the model of Masonic and other secret societies, with oaths and imposing initiation ceremonies. The oaths and ceremonies, however, had about as much significance as the banners and quaint titles in use amongst the *Oddfellows* and *Foresters* at the present time. But the Government was searching for an opportunity to break up the power of the Unions. An old Act of George III., which made the administering of illegal oaths a penal offence, was brought into action, and the six Dorsetshire labourers were punished for their innocent mummery with seven years' transportation. (See Walpole, *History of England*, Vol. III., pp. 439, 440.)

² Melbourne always remained on friendly terms with Owen personally. In the Manchester Correspondence there is a letter from him, dated April 2 (two or three weeks before the procession), representing to Owen that the action of the unionists in “these displays of force” (the particular occasion referred to by Melbourne was a funeral procession) would ultimately lead to contention and bloodshed.

“P.S. Mr. S. informs me on his inspection of the accounts of the Potters since the 12th of August last they have expended the enormous sum of £6,223 2s. 11d. in futile strikes, which if it was not experience would be decided waste to them; but the popular feeling now arising is for employing themselves, and it appears they are just now about commencing to work at a very large establishment of their own.”

Again, on May 8 of the same year, Samuel Sansome writes from Sutton-in-Ashfield to ask Owen about the prospects of Co-operation. The letter, apart from the evidence which it affords of the growing weariness of strikes amongst a section of the working classes, gives a most vivid picture of the slavery from which they were endeavouring to escape. The writer asks first whether “the Union of which we are members (the National Consolidated, I mean) is about to be placed under other arrangements, viz., your projected System of Co-operation —if so we shall Hail the Glad Day as the First of the Glorious Age when Delusion and misery shall give place to Truth and Happiness, when the poverty-stricken and Hard-working Millions shall emancipate themselves and posterity from the unjust and Tyrannical System of Competition carried on under the present unnatural state of Society.

“Worthy Sir, we have in the village in which I reside, viz., Sutton-in-Ashfield, near Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, had ample opportunity of experiencing most of the evils Concomitant on the System. Ours is a Populous Village having 5,000 Inhabitants, and in the parish 1,800 Stocking-Frames which are in the employ

of persons termed by us Bagmen, who obtain material for Manufacture, such as Silk and Cotton, from the wholesale Hosier at Nottingham or Elsewhere, and Deliver it to the workman to be wrought into Plain and Fancy goods, oftentimes reserving to themselves an Exorbitant profit on the goods, never less than 1s. in the £1, but in General to our perfect knowledge from 2s. to 8s. in the £1, and in many instances in Silk goods Cent. per Cent. But we have other things to complain of—these same Bagmen being Dealers in Common Necessaries of life deal them out to the workmen in defiance of the Law at such an enormous profit that in a Few years have sprang up a most amazing number of Shopocrats, one having in 20 years realized property to the amount of £6,000; another in 10 years £4,000; many others from £1,000 to £2,000 or £3,000 in about 14 or 16 years—all these persons being other Trades previously to their becoming Shopkeepers and Bagmen, such as Shoemakers, Staymakers, Weavers, Tailors, and Carpenters, etc., who are always upon the outcry against us if we attempt anything that appears Calculated to better our woeful condition. Nevertheless, we have attempted from time to time, by uniting ourselves, to protect our Trade with some small Advantage to ourselves (we at this time belong to the National Consolidated), and being convinced from woeful experiences that strikes amongst us will not Insure any Permanent advantage to us, and being in possession of £100 and upwards, the remains of our late Local Union Fund, have resolved to appropriate it to a different purpose, and we have taken a Commodious Building on a Lease for 5 years at Rent of £10 per Annum, and Believing that knowledge is power, shall

appropriate the upper room, 13 yards by 6, to the purposes of a school, lecture-room, etc., the lower part the same Dimensions as a warehouse, etc., with a house adjoining to commence Trading on the Co-operative and Equitable exchange principle; and understanding from the report of your discourse on the 27th instant that the Union, of which we Understand you have accepted the Leadership that [*sic*] the Co-operative System will be adopted by the Union, we shall embrace the cause with satisfaction, pledging ourselves to assist our Brothers in Union."

In the beginning of August, 1834, a special meeting of delegates of the Grand National met in London under Owen's presidency. After setting forth that the Union had "experienced much more opposition from the employers of industry and from the wealthy portion of the public, as well as from the Government, than its promoters anticipated," they resolved that the name should be changed to "The British and Foreign Consolidated Association of Industry, Humanity and Knowledge"; that all secrecy be abandoned and that the initiatory ceremony be amended so as to conform with the law of the land; that effective measures should be adopted to reconcile the masters and operatives throughout the kingdom; and that a charter be applied for from Government.¹

The report of these proceedings appears in the last number of *The Crisis*, together with a valedictory address from Owen in which he announces that the "awful crisis" in human affairs is now happily terminated; that the old world shall pass away "through a great moral

¹ *Crisis*, Vol. IV., p. 153.

revolution of the human mind, directed solely by truth, by charity, and by kindness"; and that *The Crisis* dies only "to be replaced by the *New Moral World*, in which Truth, Industry and Knowledge will for ever reign triumphant."

CHAPTER XIX

REDEUNT SATURNIA REGNA

WITH the appearance on the first of November, 1834, of the weekly paper entitled *The New Moral World*, Owen's life entered upon a new phase of activity. The disastrous year 1834 broke up many of the Co-operative Societies, and reduced those that survived to quiescence. And Owen's interest in the whole commercial side of the movement, Co-operative trading and Labour Exchanges, and his own final scheme of a Universal Consolidated Association of Producers and Consumers, had never been very keen. Even if the final and most magnificent scheme had succeeded, it would have been but a half-way house, a stepping-stone on the road to the ideal, and Owen had no love for stepping-stones and half-way houses. In the columns of the *New Moral World*, therefore, we hear little more of Co-operative Societies and Labour Bazaars. Their existence and activities no longer interested the Socialists, for by that name Owen's disciples were from henceforth to be recognised. Owen indeed takes occasion to express his own opinion pretty plainly. On visiting Carlisle in November, 1836, he writes, "To my surprise I found there are 6 or 7 Co-operative Societies in different parts of the town, doing well, as

they think, that is, making some profit by joint stock retail trading. It is, however, high time to put an end to the notion very prevalent in the public mind, that this is the Social System which we contemplate, or that it will form any part of the arrangements in the New Moral World.”¹

Again, after the final transformation, reported in the last chapter, of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, Owen and Trade Unions seem to have entirely parted company. He had expressed a desire to attend a Delegates' Meeting held in London in the autumn of 1834 in order to communicate important information, and the secretary is instructed to convey to him the following resolution:—“That this meeting respectfully declines holding any conference with or receiving any communication from Mr. Owen.”²

With the two great popular movements which marked this period, Chartism and the agitation for the repeal of the Corn Laws, Owen, again, had little sympathy. His general attitude towards these and all similar democratic movements is admirably summed up in some notes, preserved amongst the Place MSS., of a speech made by Owen in a debate on Free Trade in 1837. Place's summary of Owen's argument runs as follows: “We can support all Europe. Lose our time in discussing these subjects. Question, is there knowledge enough among the working people to put an end to all our institutions? Until equality none done. Equality more easy than any other change.”³

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. III., p. 26.

² Manchester Correspondence, Letter signed J. D. Styles, dated October 1, 1834.

³ Wallas's *Place*, p. 360, note.

Never was Owen's social philosophy compressed within so brief a compass. We find that both G. A. Fleming, the editor of the *New Moral World*, and Lloyd Jones, one of the leading Socialist missionaries, opposed the Anti-Corn Law League.¹ And the Anti-Corn Law advocates, for their part, showed little leaning to Socialist sympathies. We find Ebenezer Elliott, in 1836, warning the people against being "deluded by the Owens, the Oastlers, the Bulls and the Sadlers."²

The relations of the Socialists with the Chartists were of a more intimate character. In leading articles in the newspapers and in the mouths of the respectable classes generally, Socialist and Chartist were indeed frequently used as convertible terms. The Bishop of Exeter, in his famous speeches in the House of Lords in 1840, sought to draw fresh odium upon Robert Owen and his followers by describing their close alliance with the Chartists.

"It was a common thing," he said, "for Chartists and Socialists to meet in the same rooms, and the leaders of one body frequently assisted the leaders of the other on public occasions." Prominent Chartists were frequently prominent also in their advocacy of Socialism; the *Northern Star* and the *New Moral World* were printed at the same place by Hobson, of Leeds. The two bodies, in fact, were united in a common antagonism to religion, morality, and social order.³

But in fact, though a large number of persons, whose

¹ Holyoake, *History of Co-operation*, Vol. I., p. 231; *New Moral World*, Vol. VI., p. 748, etc.

² From the *Birmingham Journal*, reported in the *New Moral World*, Vol. II., p. 250.

³ Speech of February 4, 1840.



*From a crayon drawing by S. B. in the National Portrait Gallery.
Photo by Emery Walker.*

ROBERT OWEN.

political creed could not be defined more precisely than as discontent with the established order, belonged at one time to one and at another time to the other body, or to both simultaneously,¹ and though many prominent Chartists were or had been Socialists, it is doubtful whether any leading Socialists could have been styled Chartists. It is certain that Owen himself could at no time have fairly been so described. We have seen in the previous chapter that Bronterre O'Brien in 1832 reproached the Owenites with holding aloof from the agitation for securing political rights for the people—the Chartist movement in embryo: and that Owen had even earned the suspicion of being in league with the Government and the propertied classes for the defence of class privileges.²

The difference between the standpoint of the two movements, as it appeared to a sober-minded Socialist, is well put by Mr. Hawkes Smith in a letter to the *Morning Chronicle* in July, 1839, protesting against the confusion by that journal of the two bodies.

“The fact is that like other sensible and reflective men the Socialists as a body are Chartists ‘in the abstract,’ but they see and feel the difficulty and danger of great and sudden Government changes, and they, as a body, hold themselves aloof from political agitation. They will first secure for all the means of a good, sound, practical education, and of permanent, profitable, beneficial, leisure-affording employment; and, these things

¹ In the northern manufacturing towns, especially, Socialists and Chartists were often associated together. A large part of the funds for building the Halls of Science used by the Socialists for their meetings was subscribed by Chartists and reformers generally.

² Above, p. 432.

attained, they presume their argument for political reforms will be better worth advancing, and their voices more worthy attention. And further, they abhor all exhibitions of brute force ; and of all peaceable means they conceive—show them to be in error, if you can—that theirs, which infringes on no rights, attacks no existing accumulations of property, endangers the safety of no portion of public or private morals, will be found, as it is the safest, so also the speediest.”¹

Mr. Hawkes Smith, it will be seen, contemplates the possibility of political action, after Socialism had given education and material wellbeing to the people. But the leading Socialists aimed at nothing less than abolishing the need for political action together. Lloyd Jones, in the course of a debate on Chartism, contended that Socialism had a clearly defined plan, the application of which “ would be productive of immediate relief and permanent benefit to Society. The Chartists on the contrary gave no defined outline of the course they would pursue, the Charter itself was confessedly but a means to an end. But to what end? Almost every individual Chartist had different views on this subject; and it was clear that, independent of the time which must be employed in order to gain the means of exercising political power, after it was attained a still greater lapse of time must take place before the newly enfranchised could settle among themselves to what use they would put it.”²

A few months later, in April, 1842, Robert Owen issued an Address to the Chartists of the British Isles,

¹ Quoted in *New Moral World*, Vol. VI., p. 670.

² *New Moral World*, Vol. X., p. 183.

in which the same views are expressed in language still more uncompromising.

“Men and Brethren,” he writes, “when you and all the industrious classes are rapidly sinking into poverty . . . why waste your time in useless theories, instead of going straight forward to the immediate relief of your wants physical, mental, moral and practical?”

“Like the gentlemen who compose the Anti-Corn Law League, you expect from your measure—the People’s Charter—what it cannot give.

“It was my intention to wait patiently for the supporters of the League and the Charter to be convinced by their own experience of the futility of the paltry and most inefficient measures for which they expend so much valuable time and capital to agitate.

“You, the Chartists, have been gradually stimulated to expect the most unreasonable and impracticable results from the Charter; and if it were to be obtained tomorrow, and its workings known, there are no parties who would be more disappointed with the effects which would be produced than the Chartists themselves.

“It is not any mere political change in your condition that can now be of any service to you or to Society.”

The letter concludes with the intimation that the Chartist leaders are too ignorant and inexperienced to be able to find a remedy for the national ills, and that the true remedy must be sought in the spot from which the writer dates his manifesto—the Socialist Community at Tytherly.¹

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. X., p. 348.

Thus Owen was not identified with either of the great democratic movements of the day. Nor did he in other directions come as conspicuously before the general public during the period from 1834 onwards as in previous years. He figured indeed at a public meeting of Members of Parliament and others which met at the Exchange Coffee-house on August 11, 1835, with Lord Dudley Stewart in the chair, to consider the perennial problem of the Unemployed. Owen himself, Attwood, and James Braby¹ were appointed a sub-committee to draw up a plan for providing employment.

The report of the sub-committee when presented proved, as might have been anticipated, to be a restatement of Owen's earlier schemes for placing all the "unoccupied producers and non-producers of wealth upon the land, there to be set to work with the due proportion of agriculture, manufactures and commerce." Of the committee and the report we hear no more.²

In March of this same year Owen presented another petition on behalf of the six Dorsetshire labourers. The petition, apparently drawn up by Owen himself, sets out that the convicts were "plain, ignorant, inoffensive labourers, earning at the time they were taken 7s. a week, and most of them had families to support," and that they had no idea that they were acting illegally. Goulburn, then Home Secretary, replies briefly that all these

¹ James Braby was one of Owen's latest converts. He had recently published in the *Agricultural and Industrial Magazine* some calculations, reprinted in the *New Moral World* for May 2, 1835, showing that the labour of five hundred persons (men, women and children in the usual proportion) on one thousand acres of land might, if properly directed, be expected not only to maintain themselves, but to produce a clear annual profit of about £3,000.

² *New Moral World*, Vol. I., p. 348.

circumstances had been taken into account, and that he cannot advise Her Majesty to grant a pardon. On behalf of some later convicts—John Frost, William Jones and Zephaniah Williams—sentenced to death for high treason, Owen's appeal for mercy was more successful. On February 1, 1840, Lord Normanby writes that the Queen had been graciously pleased, in reply to Owen's memorial, to transmute the sentence to transportation for life.¹

There were other political addresses and letters to dignities and powers of various kinds during these years. The most important episode, however, was a journey to the Continent made in 1837, mainly with the object of laying his proposals for the reformation of society before Prince Metternich, to whom he carried a letter of introduction from Esterhazy, the Austrian Ambassador in London. On his way to Vienna Owen visited Paris, received the honorary membership of one or two public societies, attended a meeting of the Academy, and gave a lecture in the Hôtel de Ville, his remarks being translated to the audience by Victor Considérant, one of the most enthusiastic of Fourier's disciples, who was still living in Paris fifty years later.²

From Paris he proceeded to Munich, learnt that the King (Ludwig I.) was at his summer quarters at Berchtesgaden, and followed him there. In response to Owen's note requesting an interview the King despatched

¹ These letters are preserved in the Manchester Correspondence.

² See *Twenty Years in Paris*, by R. H. Sherard (1905), p. 379. Owen also spoke at the Athénée, where his remarks were translated by Jules Gay, Evrat and Radiguel. It was after hearing him on this occasion that Reybaud included Owen in his book, published a year or two later, *Études sur les Réformateurs*.

his Prime Minister early the following day to conduct the visitor to his presence. After an oral explanation of the New View had been furnished him, the King asked for a fuller statement in writing, and Owen left the royal presence to prepare it. On his arrival in Vienna he at once sought an interview with Metternich. "It must be remembered," he writes, "that at this period Prince Metternich was considered the most experienced and influential statesman in Europe. It was on this account I now visited him, preferring at all times to apply at once to the highest supposed intellect in authority. And it has always been my impression—and after much experience with all classes the impression is confirmed—that it will be much easier to reform the world through Governments, properly supported by the people, than by any other means. Let the Governments of Europe and America be made to see that it will be for their permanent interest and happiness that the population of the world should be taught and governed on true principles and consistent practice, and be assured they will lend their willing assistance and powerful aid to accomplish this ever to be desired result." ¹

Owen had the promised opportunity of laying his views before Metternich, who, like the King of Bavaria, diplomatically closed the interview by asking Owen to furnish a detailed statement in writing. From Vienna Owen proceeded to Dresden, where he interviewed the First Minister of the Crown, and thence to Berlin, where he was received by our Ambassador, Lord William Russell, and had much conversation with Alexander von Humboldt, whose acquaintance he had made in

¹ *Millennial Gazette*, May 15, 1856, p. 15.

Paris in 1818, in the company of Cuvier and Laplace. From Berlin he returned, towards the end of the year, to England.

With these few exceptions, however, Owen's activities throughout this period were confined to the propaganda of Socialism amongst the humbler classes in this country. So that his earliest biographer is able to write : " From this date (1834) Owen's proceedings have little to interest people generally . . . his writings were of an unpopular character ; and he had exhausted his power of exciting the enthusiasm of rich and powerful men ; the leading newspapers took no note of his proceedings, and his publications were not to be seen on the counters of respectable newsvendors." ¹

That is how it strikes a contemporary. But in fact, these years were by no means the least fruitful or least important of Owen's life. They comprise the period of his greatest literary activity. He poured himself out in continual lectures, addresses, tracts and books, throughout the whole of these years ; they represent also a time of ever-growing influence over a circle which was continually widening. That Owen had now definitely broken with Trade Unionists, with commercial Co-operators, with all schemes of political reform of any kind, enabled him to concentrate his whole energies on

¹ *Robert Owen and his Social Philosophy*, by W. L. Sargant, pp. 326, 327. Mr. Sargant's book appeared in 1860, within two years of Owen's death. No doubt Sargant was too near to the events he describes fairly to judge of their importance, or of the character of Owen's influence. Owen, in his later years at any rate, appeared to this biographer as just "an amiable and garrulous old gentleman." But it would not be fair to judge Sargant by this extract. His book, though never wholly sympathetic, is on the whole fair-minded ; gives the main facts correctly ; and represents pretty accurately the judgment of the average British Philistine.

the spread of his own peculiar teachings and to organise a compact and enthusiastic company of disciples. From this time onwards Owen had put aside the things of the old world and devoted himself to proclaiming the happiness that was coming upon the earth. The glittering vision of a whole planet partitioned out into quadrangular paradises, each with its sufficiency of well-cultivated acres, was always before his eyes; and the millennium seemed never farther off than harvest is from seedtime. Place writes on January 7, 1836, "Mr. Owen has this day assured me, in the presence of more than thirty other persons, that within six months the whole state and condition of Society in Great Britain will be changed, and all his views will be carried fully into effect."¹

This keynote is struck in the opening sentences of the first number of the *New Moral World* :—

"The rubicon between the old Immoral and the New Moral World is finally passed; and Truth, Knowledge, Union, Industry and Moral Good now take the field, and openly advance against the united powers of Falsehood, Ignorance, Dis-Union and Moral Evil. The sword of Truth and Moral Good is now unsheathed, and will not be returned to its scabbard until Falsehood and Moral Evil shall be driven from the abodes of men. . . . The First Coming of Christ was a partial development of Truth to the few, conveyed, of necessity, in dark sayings, parables and mysteries. The Second Coming of Christ will make Truth known to the many, and enable all to enjoy the endless benefits in practice, which it will assure to mankind. The time is therefore arrived when

Quoted by G. Wallas, *Life of Place*, p. 64.

the foretold Millennium is about to commence, when the slave and the prisoner, the bondsman and the bondswoman, the child and the servant, shall be set free for ever, and oppression of body and mind shall be known no more."

On May 1, 1835, there was held in the Institution at Charlotte Street a public meeting to establish the "Association of All Classes of All Nations formed to effect an entire change in the character and condition of the human race."¹ Robert Owen opened the proceedings in a speech in which he set forth the objects of the Association, the methods by which they were to be obtained, and the proposed constitution of the Society. He further announced that he had consented for a short time to act as the "Preliminary Father" of the Association; but that on May 14 of the following year, 1836, on which date, should he live so long, he would have completed his sixty-fifth year, he proposed to retire from public life, and to devote the remainder of his activity to the fulfilment of two pressing tasks—the preparation of a methodical exposition of the principles and practices of the New State of Society, and an account of his own life. Whatever time might remain he proposed to spend in visiting and confirming in the faith the numerous friends of the New System in the manufacturing districts of England and elsewhere.

The *Book of the New Moral World*, the first part of which was published in 1836,² represented the fulfilment of the first of these self-imposed tasks. Brief and fragmentary autobiographies continued in the future as in

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. I., p. 217.

² There are seven parts in all, the last being published in 1844.

the past to run through all the serial publications conducted by Owen ; but his formal Autobiography was not taken in hand until some twenty years later, and remained unfinished at his death.¹ The third task was abundantly fulfilled. For the next few years he spent some months each year in travelling and lecturing in the provinces, besides lecturing regularly on Sundays and frequently on other days when in London. The fourth volume of the *New Moral World* (Oct., 1837—Oct., 1838) records, in addition to the visits to Paris, Vienna, and Berlin, lectures delivered by Owen at Liverpool, Preston, Bradford, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Leeds, Wisbech, Lynn, Oldham, March, Halifax, Peterborough, Hyde, Boston, Norwich, Leicester, Sunderland. On at least one occasion he lectured six nights in the week and gave, in addition, two lectures on the Sunday. This week's work included Edinburgh, Glasgow, Sunderland, and Newcastle, and he left the last-named place at 3 a.m. to lecture in Leeds in the evening.² It is to be remembered that many of these journeys were probably made by coach, and that Owen at this date, May, 1838, was just sixty-seven years of age.

In the following year he lectured at Birmingham, Reading, Cheltenham, Wisbech, and elsewhere. In the autumn of 1839, at the end of a lecturing tour in Scotland, he gives the concluding lecture of a course at Glasgow on September 11 ; on the 12th and 13th he lectures (for the second time) at Edinburgh ; on the 14th he proceeds to Newcastle, and lectures in that town on Sunday the 15th. On Monday he goes to Leeds. Thence

¹ The first volume, which carried the life down to 1823, was published in 1857. Vol. IA., containing reports of addresses and other documents, appeared in the following year, the year of Owen's death.

² *New Moral World*, Vol. IV., p. 233.

to Campsall, Hull, Worksop, Doncaster, and finally to Birmingham.¹ In December we find him lecturing at Leeds and Huddersfield.² Add his constant visits to the Continent, Ireland and America, and the Socialists may perhaps be forgiven for comparing his journeyings by sea and land to those of the Apostle Paul.³

To the casual spectātor Owen's retirement must have seemed to bring him before the public more persistently than before. In fact that retirement was a spiritual event which left as little trace on the phenomenal world as the passage of the Rubicon which he had proclaimed so triumphantly in 1834, or as the Last Judgment announced by another prophet, which took place some time in 1757 and the world knew it not.

To return to the Association of All Classes of All Nations, its great object is defined as being "to carry into practical operation the system of Society propounded by Robert Owen."⁴ The progress made during the first year or two, in London at all events, seems to have been rather slow: only 207 London members are recorded at the Annual Meeting of May, 1836.⁵ But classes for reading and instruction had been formed and a Community Fund started. The next year, 1837, however, saw a great advance. The annual Congress was held in Manchester, and delegates were present from London, Liverpool, Bolton, Warrington, Bradford, Newtown (Mont.) and ten other towns, mostly in the northern manufacturing districts.

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. VI., p. 762.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. VI., pp. 943, 944.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV., p. 233.

⁴ *First Quarterly Report*; *New Moral World*, Vol. I., p. 404.

⁵ *New Moral World*, Vol. II. p. 230.

It was resolved by this Congress to enrol the Society under the Statute 10 Geo. IV. c. 56, in order to obtain a legal security for their funds. It was resolved further, on the motion of Lloyd Jones, to establish a Social Missionary and Tract Society. It was also decided after some debate that a patriarchal government was needed for the Society, at any rate in its earlier years ; and Owen was requested to continue to preside over the enterprise, his title being hereafter enlarged to "Rational Social Father." Finally a Central Board was constituted, with a Home Department at Manchester and a Foreign Department in London. A few days later the office of the Society and the publication of the *New Moral World* were transferred to Manchester. G. A. Fleming was appointed Secretary to the Board and editor of the paper. At the same time a revised statement of the aims of the Association was drawn up :—

Object : The object of this Association is to effect peaceably and by reason alone an entire change in the character and condition of mankind, by establishing over the world the principle and practice of the religion of charity for the convictions, feelings and conduct of all individuals, without distinction of sex, class, sect, party, country or colour, combined with a well devised, equitable and natural system of united property ; which united property is to be created by the members of the Association, without infringing upon the rights of any private property now in existence. And this great change is to be introduced and

accomplished by devising and adopting new arrangements, of a much higher order than any now in existence, for forming a superior character for the human race; for producing and distributing in the best manner the best qualities of all kinds of wealth abundantly for all; and for governing mankind, without artificial rewards or punishments, most beneficially for each individual.

Means: These objects are to be attained, *first*, by the establishment of a central Association with branches extending to every part of the world. *Secondly*, by the central Association and branches creating a new public opinion in favour of this entire change in the character and condition of man by public meetings, lectures, discussions, missionaries, cheap publications, mutual exchange of productions upon equitable principles without individual competition; and finally, by founding as soon as possible Communities of United Interest.¹

A "National Community Friendly Society" was also formed under the same general management for the purpose of collecting funds "for the mutual assistance, maintenance and education of the members, their wives and husbands, children and nominees." The funds were to be applied in the first instance "for the purchase or rental of land whereon to erect suitable dwellings or other buildings—wherein the members shall by united labour support each other under every vicissitude, including the establishment of schools for children."

At the next meeting of the Congress, held in

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. III., June 10, 1837.

Manchester in May, 1838, six Missionaries were appointed, Messrs. Lloyd Jones, Rigby, Green, Buchanan, Campbell and Hollick, and were allocated respectively to London, Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow. The Central Board was moved this year to Birmingham, and the paper was published in that town. At an adjourned meeting of Congress held in Birmingham in October of this year, 1838, a deputation which had been appointed to inspect sites suitable for a Community reported that they had visited a fen farm in Norfolk consisting of about seven hundred acres, in the parishes of Wretton, Wareham and Stoke Ferry, and found it so suitable that they had entered into an agreement for its purchase, and had paid a deposit of one thousand pounds.¹

By this time, it will be seen, the Association had amassed a substantial sum of money. Its numbers and influence had also greatly increased; the 53rd Branch was formed in April, 1839.² In the Congress which met in the following month, further changes were made. The two Societies—the Association of All Classes and the National Community Society—were amalgamated under the title “The Universal Community Society of Rational Religionists,” and the new Society was to be enrolled under the Act already referred to, as a religious or friendly Society. The Central Board was to pay the salaries of the missionaries,³ of whom ten were appointed,

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. V., p. 12. The purchase does not seem to have been taken up, for the estate ultimately purchased was in Hampshire.

² *New Moral World*, Vol. V., p. 408.

³ The salaries, as we learn later, varied from £80 to £100 a year (*New Moral World*, Vol. VII., p. 1007). See also “Constitution” of 1838, p. 15.

with several assistants.¹ The *New Moral World* was again to be moved, this time to Leeds, under the same editorship. It was further announced that negotiations were in progress for taking two estates for Community purposes.² In the event it appears that one estate only was actually taken—that at Tytherly in Hampshire. The history of the Community which was started there will form the subject of a later chapter.

In July, 1840, in an editorial introducing a new series of the *New Moral World* in a greatly enlarged and improved form, it is recorded that the Association now reckons sixty-two branches; it is estimated that not less than fifty thousand persons attend the various lectures and services held each Sunday in all the principal towns of the kingdom; and that the number of adherents and of well-wishers who are prevented by social considerations from openly avowing their views, or attending the lectures, is larger still.³ At this date—as the Bishop of Exeter told a House of Lords which refused to shudder—the kingdom had been divided, for the purposes of the propaganda, into fourteen districts, and the appointed Social Missionaries included no fewer than 350 towns in their visitations. The laborious Bishops could hardly do more.

From the *New Moral World* of July, 1840, again, we learn that the first Social Institution had been opened at Sheffield, and that Halls of Science or Social Institutions,

¹ The name of G. J. Holyoake does not appear in the list given in the *New Moral World* (Vol. V., p. 520). But it is mentioned there were other vacancies, notably in Birmingham, still to be filled, and I think Holyoake was appointed later in this year.

² *New Moral World*, Vol. V., p. 520.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII., p. 2.

for the use of members of the Association, were in process of erection at London, Manchester, Huddersfield, Liverpool, Birmingham, Coventry, Bradford, Halifax, Leeds, Glasgow and many other towns. During the previous year nearly £22,000 had been expended in the erection of "these Temples of Science and Truth." At Manchester the Institution had cost £6,000, at Liverpool £5,000, in London £3,000.¹ The efforts of the Socialists to erect these Halls of Science had been greatly stimulated by the refusal of the local authorities and others to lend Town Halls and other public rooms for the purpose of Socialist meetings.²

The services held every Sunday, and often twice a Sunday, in these Halls of Science or Social Institutions were for the most part modelled, like the services of the Ethical Societies at the present day, on the services of the Church of England. Hymns were sung; there were readings, mostly of an ethical or philosophical tendency; and finally an address or sermon would be delivered. That there was often matter, both in the readings and in the discourses, calculated to shock and offend, cannot be denied.³ The naming of the children which frequently took place at these services—Owen or some other prominent Socialist officiating as minister—must in itself have seemed objectionable if not actually blasphemous to most Christians.

¹ As already said, some of the funds for building these Halls had been contributed by Chartists and others who could not be labelled as followers of Owen.

² See below, Chapter xxi.

³ See the description of a service at Tytherly, quoted in the Bishop of Exeter's second speech against Socialism. Many of these sermons, etc., as reported in the *New Moral World*, were very objectionable in tone and substance.



*From a copy of the "Laws of the Hall of Science Association,"
1840, by permission of the Charitable Organisation Society.*

THE HALL OF SCIENCE, MANCHESTER.

In this and other ways offence was inevitable. But these services were founded, not in antagonism to existing beliefs and institutions, but as a means of satisfying the social and religious instincts of those who took part in them. It is impossible to read the series of *Social Tracts* circulated at this time by the Community Society, the *Book of the New Moral World*, or other of Owen's publications, without recognising the sincerity of the feeling exhibited. That feeling does not perhaps merit the epithet religious: for "religion" to most persons connotes a certain attitude of mind towards the Cosmos, certain perceptions or apprehensions of things unseen, which were conspicuously lacking in all the Socialist utterances. But if Robert Owen and his followers never lifted their eyes above the earth, they were at any rate not wanting in goodwill to men. Goodwill, unvarying and unstinted, is the keynote of all Owen's own teaching. And if the Sunday services caused offence to some, they at any rate helped to inculcate that lesson.

"Let me make the songs of the people, and I care not who makes their laws," was well said. And if we wish to realise what Socialism meant to those who revered Owen as a prophet, who should lead them into the land of promise, we can do no better than study the *Social Hymns* selected or prepared for use at meetings and festivals of the brotherhood. The authorised version contains 155 hymns and a few festival songs.¹ Some of these hymns and songs had

¹ Published in London in 1840. Second Edition. The earlier edition—itsself an enlarged version of a previous collection—had appeared at Leeds in 1838.

been culled from contemporary literature—there is, for instance, a Hymn to Death, by Richard Cumberland, the dramatist, and a warning against rash judgment of others taken from a Unitarian hymn book, etc., etc. Others bear obvious evidence that they were of home manufacture. Such are all or nearly all the numerous hymns addressed to “Community,” the “Social Scheme,” and so on. Thus No. 148 invokes Community in the following terms:—

Hail Gem of Progression, of Wisdom First Birth,
Of Charity, Joy and Good-will upon earth!
Long, long have my fairy dreams dwelt upon thee,
Thou much to be wished for; thou noble shalt be!

Nos. 129 and 65, amongst others, are devoted to the same theme:—

No. 129.

Community, the joyful sound
That cheers the social band,
And spreads a holy zeal around
To dwell upon the land.

Community is labour blessed,
Redemption from the Fall,
The good of all by each possessed,
The good of each by all.

Community is friendship's throne
With kindred minds around:
'Tis in Community alone
That friendship can abound.

Community doth wealth increase,
Extends the years of life,
Begins on earth the reign of peace
And ends the reign of strife.

Community doth all possess
That can to man be given:
Community is happiness,
Community is Heaven.

No. 65.

Outcasts on your native soil,
 Doom'd to poverty and toil,
 Strangers in your native land;
 Come, and join the social band.

Leave, oh leave, your wretched state,
 Scene of discord, scene of hate,
 Take the brother's hand we give,
 Come and in communion live.

Leave your selfish cares behind,
 Turn your loves from self to kind.
 Let the claims of *mine* and *thine*
 In all-blessing *ours* combine.

On each other cast our care,
 All each others' comforts share;
 Hand in hand and heart in heart,
 Bliss enjoy and bliss impart.

There are numerous hymns addressed to Benevolence, Liberty, Industry, Temperance, Truth, Virtue and Wisdom. It will be seen that there is an eighteenth-century flavour about the virtues selected for eulogy; and indeed the hymns throughout breathe the very spirit of that century.

Here is an invocation to Temperance, which we may surmise was made on the premises for domestic consumption.

Thou calm companion of the wise,
 Serene promoter of our joys
 By pleasure without pain;
 Thou great preservative of health,
 Thou gem beyond all pomp and wealth,
 Which all who seek may gain.

Again, the voice of the Owenite is heard in the following address to Innocence.

No. 128.

Dear Infant, are thy tender powers
 Then sinful, vile and base;
 Or dwells there evil in that smile
 Which decks thy lovely face.

No, smiling innocent, 'tis false,
 No natural vice hast thou;
 Thy mind expanding free shall be,
 Broad, placid as thy brow.

For circumstances pure and bright
 Thy progress shall surround;
 A mother's care, a father's love
 In fulness shall abound.

The following hymn to Benevolence is of higher literary merit, and was no doubt taken from an outside source.

No. 46.

No altar smokes, no off'rings bleed,
 No guiltless lives expire;
 To help a brother in his need
 Is all our rites¹ require.

Our offering is a willing mind
 To comfort the distressed,
 In others' good our own to find,
 In others' blessing blest.

Go where the friendless stranger lies,
 To perish is his doom;
 Snatch from the grave his closing eyes,
 And bring his blessing home.

So again, the following hymn to Freedom, which might more aptly have been christened "The New Patriotism," indicates an outside source:

¹ This word is printed *rights* in the *Social Hymns*.

No. 119.

Is there a thought can fill the human mind
More pure, more vast, more generous, more refined,
Than that which guides th' enlightened patriot's toil?
Not he whose view is bounded by the soil,
Not he whose narrow heart can only shrine
The land, the people that he calleth Mine;
Not he, who, to set up that land on high,
Will make whole nations bleed, whole nations die;
Not he, who calling that land's might his pride,
Trampleth the rights of all the earth beside.
No! He it is, the just, the gen'rous soul,
Who owneth brotherhood with either pole,
Stretches from realm to realm his spacious mind,
And guards the weal of all the human kind;
Holds Freedom's banner o'er the earth unfurled,
And stands the Guardian Patriot of the World.

Here we have, drawn by themselves, a picture of Socialist ideals and aspirations. Their Paradise was a life of well-fed, unambitious ease spent in cultivating the kindly fruits of the earth; their noblest type of humanity was he who should diligently practise temperance, "the great preservative of health," and a benevolence which, overflowing the narrow boundaries of family and country, aspired to fill the circumference of the planet. The list of virtues celebrated is not less remarkable if we consider what it fails to include. No place is found for Chastity or Fortitude; no place is found for Justice—an omission which will help to explain the indifference of the Socialists to all the great democratic movements of the time.

Beyond the world of humanity, the Socialist Creed is one of pure negation. There is a hymn to Death—quoted from Cumberland—of which the first stanza runs:

What art thou, Death, that I should fear
 The Shadow of a Shade?
 What's in the name that meets the ear,
 Of which to be afraid?

For the rest, the following hymn to Nature depicts the Socialist attitude in the presence of the ultimate mysteries.

No. 42. Nature :

To all earth's blessings deaf and blind,
 Lost to himself and to his kind,
 With mad presumption, lo! man tries
 To pierce the æther of the skies.

His fancy winged to worlds unknown
 He scorns the treasures of his own,
 By fears of Hell and hopes of Heaven
 His noble mind to madness driven.

Oh! first of all the tribes of earth,
 Wake to the knowledge of thy worth,
 Then mark the ills of human life,
 And heal its woes and guard its strife.

Victim and tyrant thou, O man,
 Thy world, thyself, thy fellows scan,
 Nor forward cast an anxious eye,
 Who knows to live, shall know to die.

CHAPTER XX

THE NEW MORAL WORLD

O WEN did not long delay to fulfil the promise which he had made at the inaugural meeting of the Association of All Classes of All Nations in May, 1835. The first part of the *Book of the New Moral World*, which was designed to give a formal exposition of his system, appeared in the course of 1836; to be followed at intervals during the next few years by six other parts. The first part attained a very large circulation and went through several editions in the course of a few years. An abstract of it, under the title *Human Nature, or the Moral Science of Man*, appeared in the course of the year 1838 as No. 5 in the series of Social Tracts, published by the National Community Friendly Society. Samuel Cornish, the editor of these tracts, writes to his "Venerable and Illustrious Father" in October, 1838, submitting a copy of the Tract.

"Herewith I submit to you our two last Tracts Nos. 5 and 6. No. 5 you will perceive is an abstract or condensation of the 'Book of the New Moral World': from the first sight of that work I predicted to you that it must eventually supersede all other treatises on man. I am still of the same opinion. I regard it as

the most perfect of all your excellent writings. Now there has been, as you know, a shilling or eighteenpenny edition of this work, but the millions have not 1s. or 1s. 6d. to expend in Books, or, if they have, in their present unenlightened state they feel no disposition to expend it in that way. It occurred to me therefore that an abstract, condensation, or abridgement of it should be made, which at length after reading 'The Book' several times over I have to the best of my ability accomplished. As the truths it contains—like God Himself—are immutable and unchangeable they can require no alterations or corrections. I have therefore had it cast in stereotype or unchangeable and everlasting letters."

The following brief summary of the argument is extracted from the whole seven parts of the book, which do in fact, notwithstanding many repetitions, present a fairly coherent and intelligible account of Owen's system.

There are signs, Owen says, which indicate that the time for a great moral revolution is at hand. Chief among the signs is the growth of poverty side by side with the growth of wealth; the British Empire is the richest in the world; its riches have enormously increased in the past generation, yet "millions of the most industrious population of the world are suffering from actual poverty or the fear of it."

The peoples have come to distrust the governments; there are agitations and discontent, not only in the British Empire, but throughout the civilised world, and yet there is enough and to spare for all. The mechanical inventions, the chemical discoveries of recent years,

have put fabulous wealth within our reach.¹ In an address to William IV., which is prefixed to the first part of the book, Owen gives forcible expression to his convictions on this point. "In the time of your ancestors, Sire," he writes, "fifteen millions of men could produce enough to supply the wants of fifteen millions and no more. But now a population of twenty-five millions can with the same expenditure of energy supply the wants of six hundred millions. And yet the bulk of the people pass their lives in poverty. There is poverty and misery everywhere instead of wealth and happiness, because of the irrational basis of all existing institutions." In a striking passage Owen holds up to condemnation, one by one, the causes of the evils which prevail in the world. These causes are:—

1. The Religions, so-called, of the world.
2. The Governments of the world, under every form and name.
3. The professions civil and military of all countries.
4. The monetary system of all nations.
5. The practice of buying and selling for a moneyed profit.
6. The practices which produce contests, civil and military, individual and national.
7. The present practice of producing and distributing wealth.

¹ Owen's imagination appears to have been impressed at this time by the progress of the physical sciences. Vols. III, and IV. of the *New Moral World* (October, 1836, to October, 1838) bear the sub-title "Manual of Science." Many of the Socialist Halls in the provinces were called "Halls of Science."

8. The present practice of forming the character of man.
9. Force and fraud, as now prevalent in every department of life, in all countries.
10. Separate interests and consequent universal disunion.
11. Isolated families, and separate family interests.
12. The practice of educating women to be family slaves, instead of superior companions.
13. The artificial and indissoluble marriages of the priesthood.
14. The falsehood and deception, now prevalent over the world.
15. Unequal education, employment and condition.
16. The strong oppressing the weak.
17. The levying of unequal taxes, and expending them upon inefficient measures for good, when they might be applied, most efficiently, to produce wealth, knowledge and permanent prosperity for all the people.
18. The practice of producing inferior wealth of all kinds, when the most superior would be more economical, and far more to be desired.¹

But a new light is now about to break upon the world. Truth's Second Advent is at hand.

"The First Truth, given through the spirit of the most advanced mind in former periods of the history of Humanity, declared—That to make the population of the world wise, good and happy, there must be

¹ Part. IV., pp. 44, 45 I have slightly abridged Owen's statement of the eighteen causes.

universal charity and universal kindness—men must be trained to love one another as they love themselves, and then there will be peace on earth and goodwill to men.” But the happy issue was defeated by ignorance. That ignorance is now about to be removed. “The Second Coming of Truth is to announce this all-important knowledge to the human race.”¹

The reader has already, no doubt, become familiar with the nature of the revelation about to be made. But I quote Owen’s later and fuller statement of his doctrine in his own words, in order that it may be seen that his views, though still crude enough, had developed since 1816 and 1817. Weight, if not yet perhaps sufficient weight, is assigned to the part played by heredity and ante-natal circumstances generally in the evolution of character.

The Five Fundamental Facts of Human Nature, on the understanding of which depends all right action for individuals and for Societies, are as follows :

- “ 1. That man is a compound being, whose character is formed of his constitution or organisation at birth, and of the effects of external circumstances upon it from birth to death : such original organisation and external influence continually acting and reacting upon each other.
- “ 2. That man is compelled by his original constitution to receive his *feelings* and his *convictions* independently of his *will*.
- “ 3. That his feelings and his convictions, or both of them united, create the motive to action called

¹ Part VII., p. 65.

the *Will*, which stimulates him to act and decides his actions.

- “4. That the organisation of no two human beings is ever precisely similar at birth ; nor can art subsequently form any two individuals, from infancy to maturity, to be precisely similar.
- “5. That nevertheless, the constitution of every infant, except in case of organic disease, is capable of being formed into a *very inferior* or a *very superior* being, according to the qualities of the external circumstances allowed to influence the constitution from birth.”

The means for impressing a superior character on the new generation are two : a rational education and a favourable environment—to borrow a convenient phrase from a later terminology than Owen’s.

The favourable environment is to be secured, as already declared, by founding Villages of Co-operation and Equality, each with a population varying from five hundred to two thousand souls. On the external arrangements of the villages Owen has little fresh to say. But he makes one novel suggestion, that the Government of the day should forthwith purchase the new Railways, and a strip of land from three to six miles broad on each side of them, and should lay out this property so as to form nuclei for the new Societies ; that the change from the old order to the new might be effected gradually without catastrophe.¹

Owen’s ideas of the internal organisation of the

¹ Part V., p. 57.

proposed colonies have also developed. He now proposes that the kind of labour in which each member of the Community should engage shall be determined solely by his age, the general principle being that the arts and crafts and all mechanical operations shall be undertaken by the young ; and that the older members of the community shall regulate distribution, administer justice, and provide for the external relations of the miniature Society.

There are to be eight ages in the lifetime of the man of the New Moral World :

I. "*First Class*—from birth to the end of the fifth year. To be so placed, trained, and educated that they may be in a proper temperature for their age ; fed with the most wholesome food ; lightly and loosely clothed ; regularly and duly exercised in a pure atmosphere ; also that their dispositions may be formed to have their greatest pleasure in attending to and promoting the happiness of all who may be around them ; that they may acquire an accurate knowledge, so far as their young capacities will easily admit, of the objects which they see and can handle ; and that no false impression be made on any of their senses by those around them refusing a simple explanation to any of their questions ; that they may have no knowledge of individual punishment or reward, nor be discouraged from always freely expressing their thoughts and feelings ; that they may be taught, as early as their minds can receive it, that the thoughts and feelings of others are, like their own, instincts of human nature, which they are compelled to have ; and thus may acquire in infancy the rudiments of charity and affection for all ; that

they may have no fear, but feel an implicit confidence in every one around them ; and that the immoral, selfish and individual feelings of our animal existence may be so directed as to derive their chief gratification from contributing to the pleasure and happiness of others."

II. The *Second Class*, from five to ten years of age, will "discard the useless toys of the old world." There will apparently be little formal or book education ; the children will receive their education by actually handling objects and by conversation with older persons ; they will also learn some of the lighter and easier arts of life ; they will help in the domestic arrangements and assist to keep the gardens and pleasure grounds in order. "And whatever they do they will perform as a matter of amusement and for exercise. . . . At ten they will be well-trained rational beings, superior in mind, manners, disposition, feelings and conduct to any who have yet lived."

III. The *Third Class*, from ten to fifteen years, will at first, from ten to twelve, direct and instruct those of the class below, in the work of the house and garden ; from twelve to fifteen they will learn and practise the more advanced of the useful arts and handicrafts ; the progress of science will furnish them with mechanical devices which will make all their labour light, and enable them to produce all the results required "in the shortest time, with the most pleasure to themselves and advantage to Society. . . . These new operations will be to them a continual source of instruction and amusement, to which they will look forward with the delight experienced by the acquisition of new im-

portant attainments." They will also in these five years advance rapidly in the knowledge of all the sciences, for "a royal road" to knowledge will be open to them.

IV. The youthful communists of the *Fourth Class*—from fifteen to twenty years—"will become men and women of a new race, physically, intellectually and morally; beings far superior to any yet known to have lived upon earth." In this period they will be instructors of the classes below, and active producers on their own account. In this period also the two sexes will naturally come together, and youth and maiden under the sole guidance of affection will form happy and in most cases lasting unions.

V. These four classes, aided by new mechanical and chemical inventions, may, it seems probable, be able to produce all the wealth required by the Community. But in order that there may be no failure, the *Fifth Class*, from twenty to twenty-five years, will be set apart as producers and general directors and instructors in every branch of production and education.

VI. The *Sixth Class*, from twenty-five to thirty, will not therefore be required to engage in any productive work. They will direct the distribution of the wealth formed by the junior classes. This work will probably occupy about two hours a day. The remainder of their time will be devoted to study and social intercourse.

VII. The *Seventh Class*, from thirty to forty, will govern all the internal affairs of the Community, and will compose all disputes and administer justice. The senior

member of that class will be the final arbiter in internal disputes and difficulties.

VIII. The *Eighth Class*, from forty to sixty, will undertake the foreign department ; they will correspond with other Communities ; arrange for the exchange of surplus products, and generally regulate external trade ; they will look after the public roads and organise the arrangements for travelling. They will naturally spend a large part of their own time in travelling, partly for their own pleasure, partly on the business of the Community. In this way many of them no doubt will travel round the world, finding a ready welcome in Communities like their own spread over the whole surface of the globe : "For the earth will not be the wild, barren waste, swamp or forest which with some exceptions it ever has been and yet is ; the united efforts of a well-trained world will speedily change it into a well-drained, highly cultivated and beautiful pleasure scene, which by its endless variety will afford health and enjoyment to all, such as the human mind in its present degraded and confined state has not the capacity to imagine."¹

On one point Owen's opinion has undergone no change. He is still satisfied that Malthus and his followers are fighting with shadows born of the night of their own ignorance :

"Commonsense arrangements will be required, by judicious well-devised arrangements for 'swarming,' if the term is allowable, to prevent (the Communities) from ever being over-filled, to the detriment of any one of the family, or to any portion of the population of the

¹ Part V., pp. 65-78.

world ; to drain, cultivate and beautify the earth, as it will be for the health and happiness of all that it should be drained, cultivated and beautified, the members of these swarms will be deficient for many thousand years, if not for ever.”¹

In this golden age all will have “as much enjoyment in producing as in using or consuming wealth.”²

All will find their happiness in promoting the happiness of others :

“The primary and necessary object of all existence is to be happy. . . . But happiness cannot be obtained individually, it is useless to expect isolated happiness ; all must partake of it, or the few can never enjoy it ; man can therefore have but one real and genuine interest, which is, to make all of his race as peaceful in character and happy in feelings as the original organisation or nature of each will admit. When all shall be cordially engaged in promoting the happiness of all around them, then will they have entered upon the real business of life—then will they be occupied in promoting, to the greatest limit, their own individual happiness, which has been made permanently to consist in the happiness of the race ; and the only contest among men then will be, who shall the most succeed in extending happiness to his fellows. Herein will consist true religion, and the pure and genuine adoration of all that is great, good, beautiful and magnificent throughout the Universe.”³

And this new spirit of love will govern all man’s

¹ Part VI., p. 55.

² Part I., p. 14.

³ Part IV., p. 54.

relations with the lower animals. No one, in that golden age, will wantonly injure or destroy anything that has life ; and the whole animal creation will gradually lose its fear and distrust of man. "Thus will a terrestrial paradise be formed, in which harmony will pervade all that will exist upon the earth, and there will be none to hurt or destroy throughout the whole extent of its boundaries."¹

Even the last enemy of all shall be destroyed, and Death shall lose his terrors :

"Instead of teaching man to be afraid of death (for it is altogether a matter of early training) all might be instructed to view it, as it is, as a universal law of Nature, unavoidable, and in all probability not only thus necessary, but, it may be, highly beneficial in its ultimate consequences to all that have life. Man should therefore . . . be educated to have no fears of that which is unavoidable, but rather to rejoice that, after experiencing one life of rational happiness, he shall, by his decomposition, receive an endless renewal of apparent improved existences."²

In the same year, 1835, in which Owen wrote the first part of the *Book of the New Moral World*, he delivered a series of ten *Lectures on the Marriages of the Priesthood of the Old Immoral World*. Probably none of Owen's writings have been more misunderstood, or have excited more violent antagonism than this. No doubt it was of these Lectures that Sargant was thinking when he declared that Owen's works during this period were no longer to be found on the counters of respect-

¹ Part IV., p. 20.

² Part III., p. 64. Cf. Part I., p. 33.

able booksellers.¹ Their publication gave rise to a storm of angry outcries from the Church and its partisans in the press, and Owen's language was certainly well calculated to provoke the *odium theologicum*. The lectures are in fact a high-pitched and indiscriminate condemnation of the whole institution of Marriage—for the phrase "Marriages of the priesthood" is to be interpreted "Marriages instituted and solemnised by the priesthood." The nature of Owen's indictment may be gathered from the following quotations :

"The fall of man from innocence and from the plain and direct road to intelligence and happiness occurred when the priesthoods of the world induced some of our ignorant ancestors to feel ashamed of any part of their nature. . . .² And now I tell you, and, through you, the population of all the nations of the earth, that the present marriages of the world, under the system of moral evil in which they have been devised and are now contracted, are the sole cause of all the prostitution, and of more than one half of all the vilest and most degrading crimes known to society. And that, until you put away from among you and your children for ever *this accursed thing*, you will never be in a condition to become chaste or virtuous in your thoughts and feelings, or to know what real happiness is. . . . This unnatural crime destroys the finest feelings and best

¹ The odium excited by Owen's teaching on this point has not even yet died down. A second-hand bookseller, doing a fairly large trade, assured me that not only would he not sell any of Owen's books, but that he made a point of destroying all Owenite literature which came in his way in the ordinary course of business, and that notwithstanding the fact that Owen's publications now command a high price.

² Edition of 1840, p. 44.

powers of the species, by changing sincerity, kindness, affection, sympathy and pure love, into deception, envy, jealousy, hatred and revenge. It is a Satanic device of the Priesthood to place and keep mankind within their slavish superstitions, and to render them subservient to all their purposes" (p. 7).

"No persons, perhaps, are aware of the totally different character which this single institution has given to the human race, from that which it would have acquired provided the association of the sexes had been in accordance with the natural laws of our organisation ; for in that case, the other great arrangements of human life would have been made consistent with it.

"The institution of marriage has forced the populations of all countries to adopt a system of exclusion and mystery in all their domestic arrangements, and has made it unavoidable that they should acquire the most injurious habits of falsehood, secrecy, and deception in their general conduct to each other, and to the world at large. This institution has also rendered it a matter of necessity that the most extravagant and injurious external circumstances should be formed for the accommodation of each married pair and their offspring ; and it has inflicted, morally, and physically, the direst calamities upon the human race" (p. 73).

The present system of marriage is condemned, first because it perverts and degrades a natural and lawful instinct and causes shame where no shame should be.

Secondly because it creates unhappiness for the two contracting parties : "As men and women have not been

formed with power to create their own feelings, or to love or hate at their own pleasure, but are, on the contrary, compelled to receive such feelings as the influence of external objects produce in their organization, it is blasphemy, if anything is blasphemy, against the laws of their nature, for man or woman to make any promises or engagements relative to their future feelings of affection or hatred, or of liking or disliking, for each other" (p. 16).

Thirdly, the present system of marriage takes away all opportunity for improving the race. We have learnt, Owen points out, to improve the breed of the lower animals; but in the much more important matter of breeding human beings, we are content to leave all to chance—or not even to chance, for "The effects of wealth, luxury, and marriages of ambition, upon the upper, and of the manufacturing system upon the lower orders, are now rapidly reducing the superior powers and qualities of the human organization in this country to a very low and inferior standard; and should these pernicious measures be permitted to continue, this inferior standard must, in every generation, yet become more and more defective physically, intellectually, and morally" (p. 33).

Fourthly, the training in family life is the worst training a child can have. "But the single-family arrangements are hostile to cultivation in children of any of the superior and ennobling qualities of human nature. They are trained by them to acquire all the most mean and ignorant, selfish feelings that can be generated in the human character. The children within those dens of selfishness and hypocrisy are taught to consider their own

individual family their whole world, and that it is the duty and interest of all within that little orb to do whatever they can to promote the advantages of all the legitimate members of it. With these persons, it is *my* house, *my* wife, *my* estate, *my* children, or *my* husband ; *our* estate, and *our* children ; or *my* brothers, *my* sisters ; and *our* house and property. This family party is trained to consider it quite right, and a superior mode of acting, for each member of it to seek, by all fair means—as almost any means, except *direct* robbery, are termed—to increase the wealth, honour, and privileges of the family, and every individual member of it ” (p. 36).

In any case, apart from the evil lessons of the ordinary family life, the parents are not the best persons to train their children ; their “ excess of animal affection ” stands in the way. Moreover the training of children cannot safely be trusted to mere haphazard self-elected persons. It is a matter of such high importance for society as to demand the services of specially qualified experts. For “ a child is the most valuable product nature can give to man—a being of incalculable worth, capable of returning to Society many hundredfold the capital expended and labour bestowed in nursing and rearing it.”

Owen’s denunciation of marriage is, as will be seen, in the last analysis inspired by his perception that the social structure of the Old Immoral World is based upon the family ; and that the breaking up of the family system was an essential preliminary to the introduction of the New Moral Order.

But because he denounces indissoluble unions, entered

into frequently from other motives than that of mutual affection, it does not follow that he contemplated mere promiscuity. In fact such a misrepresentation of his meaning is almost excusable; he was so preoccupied with denouncing the old order that he left himself in the original Lectures no time to explain the system which he would substitute. In some later lectures which he delivered in Manchester in 1837 he supplies this omission.

“There will be, then, no motive or inducement for any parties to unite, except from pure affection arising from the most unreserved knowledge of each other’s character, in all respects, as far as it can be known before the union takes place. There will be no artificial obstacles in the way of permanent happy unions of the sexes; for under the arrangements of this new state of human existence, the affections will receive every aid which can be devised to induce them to be permanent; and under these arrangements, there can be no doubt that, as the parties will be placed as far as possible in the condition of lovers during their lives, the affections will be far more durable, and produce far more pleasure and enjoyment to the parties, and far less injury to society, than has ever yet been experienced, under any of the varied arrangements which have emanated from the imagined free-will of the human race” (p. 87).

Moreover, in an address given in London in 1833, he had outlined some regulations for marriage and divorce; providing that the union between the sexes should be formal, and should not be entered into until after three months’ public notice; and further that no separation should take place, even if both parties desired

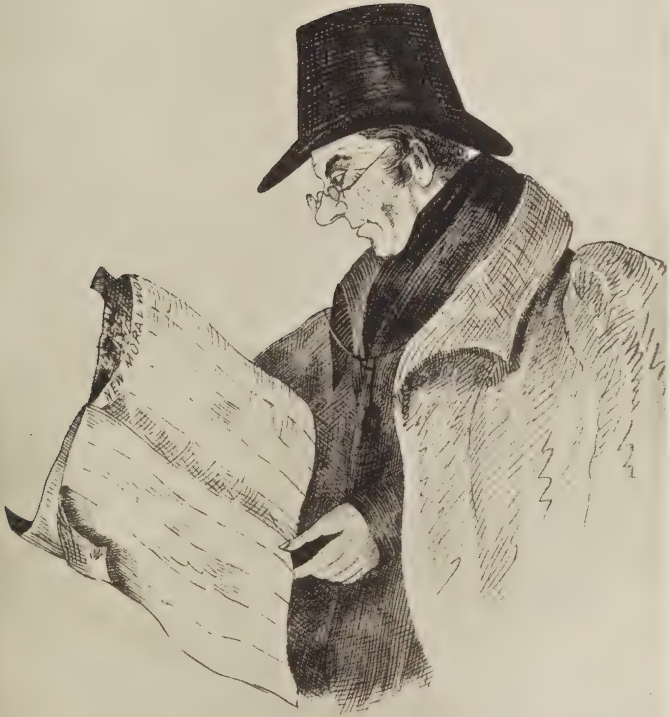
it, until after a year of union and six months further notice, *i.e.* eighteen months in all.¹

In his proclamation of the Religion of the Millennium Owen is no less outspoken. In an editorial in No. 57 of the *New Moral World*² he essays to define the nature of the Power which controls the Universe. Of that power, he says, we can have no certain knowledge, but we may conjecture it is probable

- “ 1. That an eternal, uncaused Existence has ever filled the Universe, and is therefore Omnipresent.
- “ 2. That this eternal, Uncaused, Omnipresent Existence possesses attributes ‘to direct the atom and control the aggregate of Nature’; in other words to govern the Universe as it is governed.
- “ 3. That these attributes, being eternal and infinite, are incomprehensible to man.
-
- “ 6. That if this Power had desired to make the nature of its existence known to man, it would have enabled him to comprehend it, without mystery or doubt.
- “ 7. That as this knowledge has not yet been given to, or acquired by man, it is not essential to his well-being and happiness.
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¹ The regulations are quoted in an appendix to the fourth edition (1840) of *Lectures on Marriage*.

² Saturday, November 28, 1835, Vol. II., p. 33. The editorial was subsequently republished, together with a few illustrative extracts from other sources, as No. 6 of the Social Tracts, under the title *The Religion of the New Moral World*.



Robert Owen

From a lithograph published in Manchester about 1840.

ROBERT OWEN.

“9. That the Power which made man cannot ever, in the slightest iota, be changed in its eternal course by the request or prayer of so small and insignificant a being as man is, when compared with the Universe and its operations.”

Religion, or the duty of man to this Power, Owen defined as follows :

“The whole duty of man is to attain the object of his existence, which is to be happy himself, to make his fellow-beings happy, and to endeavour to make the existence of all that is formed to feel pleasure and pain, as delightful as his knowledge and power, and their nature, will admit.”

In the millennium, he continues, there will be no temples, no forms and ceremonies, no mortification of flesh and spirit, no religious persecution ; no hard tasks to be done by man for the glory of God. There will be kindness and charity alike to Jew and Gentile, and “to produce happiness will be the only religion of man ; the worship of God will consist in the practice of useful industry ; in the acquisition of knowledge ; in uniformly speaking the language of truth ; and in the expression of the joyous feelings which a life in accordance with nature and truth is sure to produce.”

In the later part of the *Book of the New Moral World* he calls the religion of the future “The Religion of Truth,” and dwells more on this aspect of the case. The same idea is found in *The Social Bible*, a tract published by Hetherington, some time before 1841.

“I believe that the only worship that ought to be offered to a Supremely intelligent good principle, is

correct practice, that is, to speak the truth always in all simplicity, and to act at all times in perfect accordance with it.

“I believe that this practical worship of the supremely good principle of our nature is the highest and most sublime duty that man can perform to himself, to his fellow-beings and to all the intelligence that is in existence.”¹

¹ *The Social Bible*, p. 12. *The Social Bible*, though it bears Owen's name on the title page, was expressly disavowed by him in the discussion with Brindley (p. 74 of Brindley's version). It contains a brief and apparently accurate exposition of Owen's fundamental teachings.

CHAPTER XXI

THE HOLY WAR

AS will be seen from the confession of faith given at the end of the preceding chapter, Owen could not fairly be called an Atheist. He recognised a righteous and intelligent Power controlling the Universe, but denied, as many doctors of the Church have done, that man could comprehend the nature and attributes of that Power. In fact he was a Deist after the fashion of the eighteenth century. Like his other opinions his theology was borrowed from pre-revolutionary France. In these days he would, no doubt, have been labelled an Agnostic, and his views would have been regarded, even by the Church, with toleration or indifference. But the Church was less tolerant sixty years ago. And some of Owen's followers were neither so moderate nor so modest as their master. In the letter already quoted announcing the publication of Tracts 5 and 6, Samuel Cornish gives striking testimony to this effect :

“ Our friends, many of them, are generally too much inclined to push our principles to Atheism. This I hold to be extremely unwise, and indeed unphilosophical and irrational. What are they going to gain by taking up the position of Atheism? why nothing, and worse

than nothing! Can they prove their assertion that there is no God? certainly not! They cannot prove a negative! Why then, like David's fool, do they make the assertion?

"In this matter you have acted most judiciously. I wish I could say that your disciples generally speak and act with the same wisdom."

But Owen himself was not free from reproach in the matter. If he had not preached Atheism he had denounced with indiscriminate bitterness all the religions of the old world. In the *Book of the New Moral World* and his other publications, he habitually spoke of religion as a kind of insanity, and as the cause of most of the evil in the world. Thus, to take a single example, he writes:

"The errors which have created the Priesthood, and the errors which the Priesthood have created, through this long reign of mystery, falsehood and absurdities, have made the human race so artificial and irrational, that they now imagine it will be impossible that man can ever become truthful, virtuous and happy, and they say that evil must ever exist, because 'Man is bad by nature.' The Priesthood first adopt most effective measures to create vice, and to force men to become bad, and then they turn round, after having effectually executed their purpose, and say that 'men are bad by nature.' . . . All the theology now taught," he continues, "is worse than useless: in the new moral world the priesthood must be abolished, and all works of theology destroyed."¹

And when he spoke of the priesthood as "the

¹ *Book of the New Moral World*, Part III., pp. 55, 56.

chief of the Satanic Institutions of the world,"¹ and of celibacy as a virtue only "according to the unnatural notions and imaginations of a most degraded order of men called the Priesthood," he hardly bettered matters by explaining in other passages that the priests themselves were but part and parcel of the old moral order, making it not more than themselves made by it. The unregenerate man was prone to confound the prophet's lofty indignation against sin with mere human contempt and ill-will for the sinner.

The public platform afforded ample opportunity for the expression of the views of the Socialists and of their opponents. There grew up a practice at this time amongst the Socialists of issuing or accepting challenges to meet champions of orthodoxy in formal discussions—often lasting several nights. One of the earliest of these discussions took place between Owen himself and a Nonconformist minister named Roebuck, in Manchester—at that time the headquarters of the new cult—in May, 1837. Owen's share in the discussion was to expound the Five Fundamental Facts, and the rest of the system with which we are already familiar. Briefly, he contended that a man's character is entirely formed for him, and that it can be traced to two distinct sources—inherited organisation and the influence of external (post-natal) circumstances—the latter outweighing the former more than a hundred to one.² Man's belief is not a matter of will, but of

¹ *Lectures on Marriage*, p. 4.

² *Public Discussion between R. Owen and the Rev. J. H. Roebuck*, p. 10. Second Edition, revised and authorised by the Speakers. London, 1837.

external circumstances, mainly geographical. In fact, man is a geographical animal, and the several religions of the world so many "geographical insanities." Of God we can know nothing, nor of a future life. "Anything we can say on the subject will not alter the future state of existence, but sure I am, that a life of intelligence, charity and kindness here, will be the best possible preparation for a future state" (p. 32).

On the other hand, Roebuck proclaimed that Owen would drag Jehovah from His seat in the Universe, and make the evils of the world ten thousand times worse than before. Owen's new religion might suit those in good health; but what had it to offer to the sick and the bereaved? In short, the discussion for the most part proceeded on parallel lines and the adversaries never came to close quarters. But Roebuck showed himself the better debater, and made one strong point against his opponent:

"According to Mr. Owen's system, we are but mere machines, impelled by a force over which we have no control, and we are the mere sport of circumstances, and move on by their influence in that precise direction in which they chance to carry us. And yet, strange to say, we have the power to alter and control the constitution of the circumstances by which we ourselves are constantly surrounded and controlled. . . . Mr. Owen cannot explain to us consistently with his scheme, how out of the rubbish of the old irrational world, he sprang up so beautifully rational."¹

¹ pp. 22 and 57.

To this argument Owen gave no reply. Indeed, the whole discussion may serve to illustrate Lewis Carroll's famous postulate—that an argument may be conducted round any point, and at any distance from that point. But if the combatants, and Owen especially, were more potent in assertion than in demonstration, there was no display of heat or rancour. Owen was invariably courteous, and Roebuck proved himself no less so. The whole debate was conducted in a seemly fashion, and the two antagonists parted, as they had met, with mutual respect and goodwill.¹

Of a different temper were some other theological antagonists of this period. From 1837 onwards there were several self-constituted champions of the faith who made it their business—and apparently a not unprofitable business—to go about from town to town delivering lectures and stirring up public feeling against the Socialists. Barker, Pallister and Brindley were the most conspicuous of these crusaders. The first named some years later became a Unitarian, and subsequently a Spiritualist. In the transition stage between these two faiths he wrote a manly letter to Owen, acknowledging that he had done him injustice :

“Accept my thanks, venerable friend, for your life-long labours in the cause of truth, of freedom, and of social improvement. I did you great wrong in the days of zeal for orthodoxy. I am glad I have lived to see my error, to retract my

¹ There is a kindly reference to Roebuck's death a year or two later in the *New Moral World*, Vol. IX., p. 37.

reproaches, and that you have lived to receive this retractation.”¹

But Brindley was a man of a different type; an egotist and bully of the baser kind, eager to find an arena suitable for the display of his own powers as defender of the faith, and not over-nice in his choice of weapons for the purpose. In the winter of 1839-1840, and for some years later, he went about from town to town lecturing against the Socialists and stirring up strife. As he was a fluent speaker, and apparently well-practised in all the arts of the platform orator, he created some consternation in the ranks of the Owenites, and the Manchester Correspondence contains appeals to Owen from Huddersfield, Rochdale, Bradford, Leeds, and elsewhere, describing Brindley's campaign, and urging Owen himself to come forth and do battle with so redoubtable a champion. Owen did eventually meet Brindley on a public platform, as will be described later. Meanwhile, it is enough to say that, not content with seeking to overthrow his adversaries in argument, Brindley is stated to have persuaded master manufacturers to give their men notice to leave the ranks of the Socialists, on pain of dismissal from their employment.²

Further, in a series of speeches and tracts Brindley made charges of gross immorality against several leading Socialists, named and unnamed. However pure Owen's motives, however high his example, it is certain that

¹ Manchester Correspondence, July 2, 1854.

² Letter from Charles Howarth, Rochdale (Manchester Correspondence), December 9, 1839; Holyoake's *History of Co-operation*, Vol. I., p. 325, edition of 1875.

the teachings of the *Lectures on Marriage* would be calculated to lead to consequences of the kind; and the reckless and intemperate language employed by Owen could only make these results more probable. It is not worth while now to rake up old scandals; but some of Brindley's most serious charges were made with the names of the offenders, and these charges do not appear to have been denied by the Socialists concerned. In one case, indeed, a denial was offered which was more damning than silence would have been. One of the most conspicuous figures, next to Owen himself, in the Socialist organisation was accused in one of Brindley's pamphlets¹ of having deserted his wife and family, and of having seduced his sister-in-law. At a public meeting in Leeds the accused and his wife contradicted with much emphasis the first charge, and kept silence about the second. Whether Brindley's charges were in the main well founded or not, the fact that they were made and were not contradicted brought much odium upon the Socialists.

But other circumstances at this time contributed to bring the religious views of the Socialists prominently before the public. On June 26, 1839, Robert Owen was presented in due form to the Queen by Lord Melbourne, and took the opportunity to lay before Her Majesty an address "from the Congress of the Delegates of the Universal Community Society of Rational Religionists, soliciting the Government to appoint parties to investigate measures which the Congress proposes to ameliorate the condition of Society." The presentation was unfavourably commented upon in the public press,

¹ *The Immoralities of Socialism*, published in 1840.

and the "Philalethean Society, or Society for Peaceably Repressing Infidelity," which had its headquarters in Edinburgh, presented a humble address to the Queen, representing the harm that might come from the countenance given by Her Majesty to a notorious unbeliever.

In the following year the doctrines of Socialism became the subject of debate in the House of Lords. The accuser was Henry Philpotts, Bishop of Exeter, an intolerant Churchman, who had made himself conspicuous by opposing Catholic Emancipation and was later to win notoriety in connection with the Gorham controversy on Baptismal regeneration; a rancorous political partisan, who owed his advancement to the Bench to the services rendered to the Tory party by his not too scrupulous pen.¹

An occasion for the Bishop's intervention was found in the presentation of a petition from the clergy, magistrates and traders of the town of Birmingham on the subject of Socialism. In presenting the petition on January 24, 1840, he spoke at some length, and renewed the attack on February 4, in moving for an inquiry into the subject. The Bishop began by upbraiding the Government—the Liberal Ministry under Lord Melbourne—and especially the Home Secretary, Lord Normanby, who had held that office for barely five months, with their apathy in that they had done

¹ Philpotts was, as Lloyd Jones reminds us, the "Reverend Pamphleteer" of Moore's satirical verses:

Stop, stop, said Truth, but vain her cry
 Left far away in the rear,
 She heard but the usual "gay Good-bye"
 From her faithless Pamphleteer.

nothing, and apparently intended to do nothing, to check the advance of Socialism. Yet the Government, he contended, must be aware that under a Statute 57 George III. (an Act passed in the panic of 1817 and aimed at the Spencean and Hampden Clubs) the very existence of a Society such as the Universal Community Society, having branches all over the country and an organised propaganda by missionaries, was illegal: it was illegal, moreover, in its avowed object, which was to alter the laws and institutions of the country. The fundamental doctrine of the Socialists—that man was not a responsible agent—cut at the roots of all human society. Further, Owen explicitly taught that the existing organisation of society was faulty, and must be amended, peaceably, if possible, but amended anyhow. In this connection the Bishop quoted a passage from Owen's discussion with Roebuck—

“It is to the interest of every individual in the family of man that this great and glorious change should now be commenced, and that all Governments should lend their aid to perfect it, that it may be produced without force, peaceably and by reason. But should the Governments now decline, from ignorance of their present position, to take the lead in this great work, then will the people of necessity undertake and accomplish it for themselves and for Governments.”

Moreover—the Bishop continued—Owen had constantly denounced the institution of marriage, and the Christian religion. A few typical utterances by Owen, G. A. Fleming and other Socialists were quoted in this connection. There were other horrid blasphemies and immoralities, he added, with the recital of which

he would not pain their Lordships' ears. There was a book by Owen which had been put into the Bishop's hands—the reference is no doubt to the *Marriages of the Priesthood*—and one passage in that book had been placed before the episcopal eyes, but he had never since permitted his mind to be polluted by looking at it again. Some of the worst blasphemies and obscenities he could not bring himself to quote, not even to convince the noble Marquis (Normanby) of the necessity for prompt action—he could not and would not do it.

The Bishop then proceeded to cite illustrations of the terrible results which had already, as he asserted, followed from these damnable doctrines—cases of suicide, murder, and sudden death. Next, he pointed out that this was no obscure and dwindling sect, but a powerful and growing organisation, having sixty branches throughout the country; that the whole kingdom had been mapped out into fourteen districts, each with its due complement of missionaries, who regularly lectured in no fewer than 350 towns; there was a weekly paper—the *New Moral World*—devoted exclusively to the propaganda, and many friendly organs in the outside press; the sale of tracts in the previous year had reached 500,000; the Society had erected large halls for meetings in several of the manufacturing towns; and they were now buying or leasing estates in order to carry out their economic ideals. Moreover, the Society had adherents in official quarters: W. Pare, a Vice-President of their Central Board, was Superintendent Registrar at Birmingham; the Mayor of Coventry had lent the Guildhall to a Socialist lecturer;

and after lending it in turn to Brindley had repented his impartiality, and had cut short that most respectable gentleman's eloquence after a quite inadequate number of days. Moreover the Mayor was credibly reported to have subscribed to the Socialist funds. The Mayor of another city—he hesitated to name it, but the Bishop of London supplied the omission—the Mayor of the Cathedral City of Lincoln had also lent the Guildhall for Socialist lectures. The Bishop had always considered the Municipal Corporations Reform Act to be a most disgraceful measure, and these sad occurrences amply justified his opinion. Again, he had received information through a clergyman, who had recently discovered with horror that part of the new Community farm at Queenwood was actually situated in his own parish, that music, dancing and singing took place there on Sunday afternoons. Finally the First Minister of the Crown had recently introduced the arch heretic, the author of all these damnable doctrines, into the presence of his Sovereign.

The Bishop would hesitate to suggest that the neglect and indifference of the Government in the face of this grave national danger arose from any sympathy with the Socialists, or from any anticipation of political advantage; he would prefer to ascribe it to ignorance—an ignorance culpable indeed, but not perhaps criminal. Now, however, that their eyes were opened, there could be no excuse for continued inaction:—"He defied the noble Marquis at the head of the Home Department to forbear proceeding, and he called upon him in the face of that House, the Sanctuary of the justice of the Country, to give their Lordships an assurance that

night that he would inquire into these facts now brought under his notice, and if on inquiry he found them to be anything like true, that he would not expose his Sovereign and himself to the reproach of having abandoned the best, the most sacred, and the most holy interests of mankind."

Such in substance was the Bishop's indictment. No doubt the Socialists had been guilty of many extravagances and absurdities, and in the insolence of their new-found freedom they had no doubt been heedlessly or wantonly offensive in their treatment of beliefs and institutions which they claimed to have outgrown. In demonstrating this the Bishop had an easy task, and perhaps his carefully elaborated indignation achieved its effect with the larger gallery for which it was, no doubt, intended. But he did not succeed in making the flesh of the Lords temporal to creep. In fact throughout the torrent of eloquence the Churchman's zeal for religion and morality appears to have been less conspicuous than the politician's eagerness to snatch a party advantage. As the *Patriot* wrote at the time: "We could have wished to hear from a Christian Bishop more of lamentation at the immorality of the Socialists than of declamation over the illegality of their proceedings, and it would have been as well to avoid the appearance of acting the part of a calumniator in reference to Her Majesty's Ministers, at the very moment of invoking the arm of power against the Owenites. Ill-natured persons might be led to suppose that, after all, Robert Owen was not quite so obnoxious to the Bishop as the Marquis of Normanby."¹ A rhymed paraphrase

¹ Quoted in the *New Moral World*, Vol. VII., p. 1084.

of the speech which appeared in the *Morning Chronicle* of January 28 runs to the same effect: the last six lines are as follows:

He never believed a rash report,
But who took Robert Owen to Court?
He would not offend, but would fain be knowing
If Normanby was not as loose as Owen;
And would ask, nought meaning by the hint,
Did *he* believe in God, for Owen didn't!

Ministers, in the persons of Lord Normanby and Lord Melbourne, replied to the Bishop's challenge by denying that the question was as serious or as urgent as the prelate contended. The movement had been going on for some years, under Whig and Tory Governments alike, and there was no indication of the rapid and alarming growth which the Bishop's speech portended. "The few isolated extracts from letters which the Bishop called evidence," said Lord Normanby, "afforded no justification for the very extraordinary measures which he had called upon the Government to take"; the speaker felt also some misgivings "as to the accuracy of the statements which had been made by the Right Reverend Prelate, as to the fairness of his inferences, and the charity of the imputations which he had thrown out on the Socialist body and on the Government."

As to the Act of 1817, if the Socialist Society by its constitution came within the terms of the Act, so would many religious and philanthropic Societies, with some of which the Right Reverend Prelate might himself be connected. In any case it had been the practice of successive Governments for some years past

to allow considerable freedom of speech in these matters ; and it was doubtful, even if legal offences could be proved, whether the advertisement of a prosecution would not do more to advance the cause than any punishment which the law could inflict would effect to retard its progress.

Lord Melbourne followed in the same strain. He admitted that he had been imprudent in presenting Owen at Court without inquiring more particularly into the nature of the doctrine and practices which he was assisting to propagate ; but their Lordships, by voting an enquiry into the system of Socialism, were proposing "to introduce him at Court a second time, and in a way that would give him and his sect a much greater and stronger encouragement" than had been given by the original presentation. Lord Lansdowne sympathetically enquired whether the Bishop, who had told them that night how he had polluted his mind in the cause of righteousness by enquiring into the doctrines of Owen, had incurred further pollution by examining the kindred question of St. Simon and his followers. That further pollution, the speaker pointed out, would have convinced the Bishop that these systems, if left alone, tend to perish of their own absurdities.

On the other side more Bishops and the Duke of Wellington pressed for the enquiry, which was in the event agreed to without a division.

Of the enquiry we hear no more. But William Pare was forced to resign his office as Registrar ; not because he had painted up at the door of his office his title as Vice-President of the Universal Community Society, nor because he had presided at a meeting where the existence



From a contemporary newspaper, by permission of the Charity Organisation Society.

THE GOBLIN SPRITE; OR, THE OLD WOMEN AND THE BUGABOO.

Mother Fillpurse (Bishop Philpotts of Exeter),
Mother Blightfield (Bishop Blomfield of London),
Mother Cantaway (Archbishop of Canterbury), and
Mother Wellington, chasing the New Moral World.

of God was called in question—for the Bishop's statements on these matters appear to have been as ill-founded as most of his detailed charges¹—but because the Home Secretary held that Pare's intimate connection with an Association holding the views advanced by the Socialists was incompatible with an official position under the Government of the country.

The flame lighted by the Bishop was a twelvemonth later fanned to a conflagration. On the evenings of January 5, 6, and 7, 1841, Robert Owen and John Brindley met in the amphitheatre at Bristol to discuss the question—"What is Socialism and what would be its practical effects on Society?"

Brindley, the most foul-mouthed of all the antagonists of Socialism, had already made charges against Owen's conduct as a husband; and had further impeached his personal integrity in his dealings with the fortunes of his sisters-in-law. On this account Owen had, in the previous year, refused to meet Brindley on a public platform,² and it would have been well if he had persisted in his refusal at Bristol. But he allowed himself to be over-persuaded, from fear apparently of being thought to shrink from the ordeal.³

Brindley behaved after his kind. It is difficult even now to read the records of the debate, preserved in the official account issued by Brindley himself, without experiencing feelings of shame and indignation stronger than Owen's system would have sanctioned. Brindley,

¹ For an exposure of other misstatements see *New Moral World*, Vol. VII., p. 1107.

² *New Moral World*, Vol. VIII., p. 4.

³ See the correspondence printed at the beginning of the Home Colonisation Society's report of the proceedings.

a popular lecturer who knew his business, skilled in cheap rhetoric and effective repartee, employed all the arts of the platform hooligan to bring ridicule and discredit on his aged antagonist, too simple to foil the attacks, and too little used to insolence to know how to deal with it. The debate was turned by Brindley himself on Owen's personal views on religion and on marriage. Owen's exposition of his beliefs, especially his views on marriage, as already shown, lent itself only too easily to misrepresentation, and Brindley used his opportunities to the full. He began by quoting some of Owen's utterances on the religions of the world, and then with the connivance and ultimately the active assistance of the chairman repeatedly pressed Owen to give a direct answer to the question—did he or did he not believe in the Bible as the inspired word of God? When Owen had ultimately admitted that he did not accept every word of the Bible as true, Brindley triumphantly acclaimed him as an infidel and an atheist.

Again, taking passages from *The Marriages of the Priesthood*, isolated from their surroundings, and using them as texts for the display of virtuous rhetoric, he readily achieved his purpose of exciting the passions of the audience against the venerable Socialist. But he was not content with this measure of success. Brindley had undertaken at the beginning of the discussion to quote only from Owen's acknowledged works. But in his search for telling extracts on the Marriage question, he cited from a lecture given by Campbell, one of the Social Missionaries, and from an editorial in the *New Moral World* written by Fleming, just as, in his tract published in the previous year, *The Marriage System of Socialism*,

he had quoted some passages from Shelley, attributing the quotation to Owen. When Owen in the course of the debate pointed out this last misattribution, Brindley justified his action, on the ground apparently that the quotations were contained in a pamphlet bearing Owen's name on the title page.¹

Again, he sought to rouse odium against Owen by reference to Robert Dale Owen's *Moral Physiology*, and the chairman again lent his assistance by dramatically protesting to the audience that the passages shown to him in that book were too filthy to be read.

A more serious and a more reckless, if not actually wilful, perversion was Brindley's repeated statement that Owen's New Marriage System contemplated a three-months trial, "a new wife quarterly," as it was paraphrased.² "The operatives of this country," he said, "are a virtuous-minded set of people—they do not

¹ The passages in question are to be found in one of the notes to "Queen Mab," on the line "Even love is sold." One of the passages quoted runs:

"Chastity is a monkish and evangelical superstition, a greater foe to natural temperance even than unintellectual sensuality; it strikes at the root of all domestic happiness, and consigns more than half of the human race to misery, that some few may monopolise according to law. A system could not well have been devised more studiously hostile to human happiness than marriage." Then follows the passage a few lines lower down beginning, "That which will result from the abolition of marriage. . . . Should she look in the mirror of Nature." In the first (1838) edition of *The Marriages of the Priesthood* the whole of the note from Shelley was printed as an appendix to Owen's Lectures. This had been done, as is explained in a note to the version of the Owen-Brindley debate published by the Home Colonisation Society (London, 1841), without Owen's knowledge. But Brindley's mistake is without excuse, as the authorship of the passages is clearly stated in the pamphlet.

² *Public Discussion between John Brindley and Robert Owen*. Printed, without correction by either party, from the Verbatim Report of the Shorthand Writers (1841), p. 62.

want, they will not accept, the foul offer of a three months' trial."¹ It was in vain that Owen pointed out that this was a gross misrepresentation; that three months, under his new system, was to be the period of notice given before the marriage could be celebrated. Brindley would not retract, and the chairman took no notice of the matter.²

Of the conduct of the debate from the chair it is difficult to speak with patience. The chairman indeed delegated his function of timing the speakers—each was limited to half an hour at a time—to a clerical friend, and there were complaints that the time was not allotted with strict impartiality. Owen on one occasion significantly rose when the sands of the hour-glass had run down, but Brindley appears to have been allowed to continue speaking for some minutes longer. But the chairman himself, though loudly protesting his complete impartiality, practically acted as a second to Brindley throughout the debate. He allowed the fellow to bully and bluster at his will, to indulge in irrelevant bits of stage business—such as the dramatic presentation of a Bible to Owen—and to divert the debate into serviceable side issues. Further, he not only allowed the public to interrupt Owen, but he himself throughout the debate acted as the mouthpiece of these interruptions, and insisted upon Owen's breaking the thread of his discourse

¹ *Public Discussion between John Brindley and Robert Owen* (1841), p. 71.

² In fact under Owen's system a divorce could not take place even by mutual consent until eighteen months after marriage *at the earliest*. The parties could not give notice of their desire to separate until twelve months after marriage; and must then return to live together for six months longer before the divorce would be granted. (*Lectures on Marriage*, fourth edition, p. 89.)

to meet this or that objection raised by some speaker in the body of the hall. And when Owen, unapt at debate and confused by the discourtesy shown to him, and by these continual interruptions, contradicted himself or wandered in his argument, the chairman, with a spite which was too mean a passion to deserve the name of *odium theologicum*, took delight in increasing the old man's embarrassment by persisting in his unmannerly interference.

At the conclusion of the meeting the reverend timekeeper proposed a resolution condemnatory of Socialism; one of Owen's supporters who endeavoured to speak against it failed to obtain a hearing, and the resolution was carried with hardly a dissentient voice.

Owen's meeting with Brindley was no doubt a mistake, as the Socialists themselves recognised. Some of the Socialist Missionaries had already met Brindley on public platforms, and had not come off second best; Lloyd Jones, in particular, had held a discussion with him at Macclesfield just a month before the meeting with Owen, and vainly endeavoured to pin him down to a second meeting at Bristol immediately afterwards. But as the secretary of the Bristol Branch said of the Brindley-Owen debate, "it could hardly be called a discussion, as neither of the disputants took any notice of the arguments or observations of his opponent . . . the general opinion here is that Mr. Owen has acted very unwisely in meeting Mr. B., and that he is not qualified to meet such an opponent."¹ The Bilston Branch forwarded an address to Owen, requesting him,

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. IX., p. 70.

in the interests of his own health and comfort, not to waste his powers in future over such an unworthy opponent.¹

Owen in his reply characteristically justifies his peculiar method of conducting the so-called "discussion"—"It would have been the loss of most precious moments for me to have attended to anything Mr. Brindley might say, instead of using them to tell the world what I wished it to learn from myself."²

But if the cause of Socialism suffered some discredit through Owen's ineffective championship, the cause of true religion met with deeper indignity in being misrepresented by a person of the type of Brindley. Some of the newspapers in their reports of the discussion recognised this.³ Later, Brindley received a severe snub from the Manchester magistrates. An application was made to them to stop the delivery of a lecture to be given by Lloyd Jones—"A comparison of the characters of Moses, Jesus Christ, Martin Luther, Robert Owen." Brindley, in supporting the application, said "he should feel it his duty to attend the Hall of Science next day, and he should put out placards. He had no doubt a riot would ensue, if the police did not attend."

To which Mr. Herapath, one of the magistrates, replied: "I know nothing of any duty incumbent on Mr. Brindley more than on any other member of the

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. IX., p. 71.

² *Ibid.*, p. 87.

³ See a report in the *Bristol Mercury*, quoted in the *New Moral World*, Vol. IX., p. 83. "As far as manner is concerned, Mr. Owen had distinctly the advantage—truth can derive no aid from petulance and assumption."

Community. If any breach of the peace occur, we shall hold those who caused it responsible, whatever may be their opinions.”¹

But the spoken word had its effect, and the oratory of the Bishop and of Brindley did not fail to bring forth fruit after its kind. For some years previously, indeed,—largely, it would seem, owing to Brindley’s inflammatory harangues—Owen and his followers had been liable to insult, if not to actual violence, and difficulties had been thrown in the way of their propaganda. Thus William Legg, an Independent Minister, writes to Owen from Reading in December, 1838 :

“I condemned the policy which shut you out of the Town Hall, . . . I consider such exclusion as nearly allied to the proceedings of the Star Chamber, and as part of a system that would, if it could, employ physical force to control the operations of mind. All that truth wants is a fair field, and the free use of her weapons, and instead of slamming the doors of a public Assembly Room in the face of a benevolent though mistaken fellow man, I would that those who did this thing had met you there to confute your opinions by sound argument.”

Again, a twelvemonth later, Dr. Jacobson writes from Huddersfield on December 16, 1839 :

“I was very sorry indeed when I heard that the commercial travellers at the George Hotel insulted you, and felt more indignation when the public press sanctioned the sad affair. Every man who has a soul to

¹ From report in the *Bristol Mercury* of February 6, 1841, quoted in the *New Moral World*, Vol. IX., p. 119.

comprehend honour and his duty, must respect you for being the friend to the working classes—to the white slaves who are born in the most Christian country, commonly called, the paradise of Clouds, or England ; those homeless people brought home to England honour and fortune, and the English Capitalists repay them them with naked distress. I am not a Socialist, but esteem and respect you, and if I can be of any service to you in Germany or France, I will do it with pleasure.”¹

But from 1840 onwards the Holy War was waged with increasing vigour against the Socialists in all parts of the kingdom. The methods at first employed were of the crudest kind. A large hall was being erected in Manchester, to serve as a meeting-place of the Owenites—a hall so large and imposing that it had received the name of the Social Cathedral.² At the end of April, 1840, a few weeks before the time fixed for the formal opening, a deliberate attempt was made to burn the building, fires consisting of shavings dipped in turpentine having been kindled in three separate places simultaneously. Fortunately the attempt was discovered, but the perpetrators were never brought to justice.³

In June of the same year Brindley lectured in the Pottery Towns against Socialism, and so stirred up the people that a prominent manufacturer, Mr. Wood of Burslem, discharged from his employment some

¹ Manchester Correspondence ; letters of December 22, 1838, and December 16, 1839.

² It was afterwards bought by the city to serve as a Public Library (Holyoake, *History of Co-operation*, Vol. I., p. 297).

³ *New Moral World*, Vol. VII., p. 1295, May 9, 1840.

workmen whom he found to favour Socialist principles.¹ Further, Owen was shut out from the theatre at Newcastle (Staffs.), the use of which had been promised him for his lecture; and he was subsequently refused the use of the Town Hall at Stoke-on-Trent.² Eventually he proceeded to Burslem to deliver his lecture in the Social Institution in that town. But the clerical party had been before him, and a handbill was circulated through the town calling upon the people to "assemble, before the meeting, in a peaceable and orderly manner," and "to declare this poison shall no more be retailed among us." It is easy by an appeal to religious prejudices to cause a crowd to assemble; it is more difficult to ensure that the resulting assemblage shall behave in a "peaceable and orderly manner." As a matter of fact the populace was summoned to this peaceable and orderly assemblage by the sound of drums and fifes, and it is said that liquor was freely distributed among them. In the circumstances both parties may be accounted fortunate that the resulting disturbance did not have graver consequences. What actually happened was that when Owen appeared on the scene he was mobbed and forced to take refuge in an adjoining house and wait there for some hours. A. Campbell, one of the most prominent Social Missionaries, was chased by the mob for some distance and roughly handled. The members of the audience who had assembled in the hall to hear the lecture were attacked and maltreated; and the committee, including several women, had to barricade themselves in a room at the end of the hall, and there stand a regular siege. None

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. VIII., p. 16.

² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

of the Socialists seem to have been seriously hurt, but there were several minor injuries from sticks and stones, and considerable damage was done to the hall of the Social Institution. No arrests, however, were made; and the Owenite accounts assert that the Chief Constable and the clergy were present as interested but passive spectators, if they did not actually encourage the rioters.¹

Later in the year Brindley lectured at Congleton and Macclesfield, being met in debate at the latter town, as already said, by Lloyd Jones. In both towns it is said that numbers of Socialist workmen were discharged from their employment in consequence of Brindley's eloquence. Lloyd Jones was successful, however, in his efforts to get some of these men reinstated.²

At the beginning of the following year, 1841, there were disturbances at Bristol, shortly after the debate between Owen and Brindley. The mob's violence could in this case also be directly traced to Brindley's inflammatory speeches. On Sunday, January 17, some persons created a disturbance during a lecture by G. Simkins delivered in the newly opened Socialist Hall at Broadmead, Bristol. The lecture was perforce cut short, and the hall having been cleared with some difficulty, the Socialist Committee proceeded to hold a meeting behind the barricaded doors. But the mob burst in the doors, "rushed in, and the scene of devastation commenced. The dome lights were smashed, the gas fittings torn down; forms and platforms de-

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. VIII., pp. 16, 25.

² See his *Life of Robert Owen*, pp. 365-7. See also *New Moral World*, Vol. VIII., p. 398.

stroyed," and an attempt was made to burst open the door of the inner room, where the committee with some women and children had taken refuge. One of the committee made his way out through the skylight and went to summon the police. Eventually, before any personal violence had occurred, the police arrived on the scene, and the Socialists were conducted safely out of the hall. One of the aggressors was caught, brought before the magistrates on the following day, and bound over to keep the peace. Summonses were issued against others for destruction of property.¹

On the news of these events reaching London, Lloyd Jones was despatched to Bristol, arriving there on the morning of the 20th. He attended a lecture given by Brindley that evening, and delivered a challenge to the lecturer to meet him, as one of the authorised Social Missionaries, in a public discussion. Eventually the challenge was accepted, and a meeting agreed upon; but Brindley finally evaded the issue.²

On the following Sunday, January 24, Lloyd Jones lectured in the Broadmead Hall—which had in the mean-

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. IX., pp. 69, 70. Lloyd Jones (*Life*, p. 368) says that Owen himself was present on the occasion of the riot, and was only saved from the mob by the courageous efforts of his friends, who fought their way through. I can find no mention of this incident in the *New Moral World*; and it seems unlikely that Owen would again have visited Bristol within a few days of his discussion with Brindley—which Lloyd Jones does not mention in this connection.

² See the correspondence between Brindley's committee and the secretary of the Bristol Socialists, published in the *New Moral World*, Vol. IX., pp. 134, 135. (The numbering of the pages is duplicated—as is not infrequently the case in the paging of the *New Moral World*—so that there are two pages numbered 134, and two numbered 135. The correspondence referred to extends over all four pages.)

time been hurriedly fitted up again by a number of young volunteer workmen—to an audience which was estimated to consist of about three thousand persons. On leaving the hall he found himself in the midst of an angry mob, who had been waiting for his appearance. He managed to take refuge in a public house, and was ultimately rescued by the police. On the following night the same scene was repeated, and Lloyd Jones again had to be escorted into safety by the police. After this the disturbance ceased, and on Sunday, January 31, Jones was able to deliver without disturbance to a crowded audience the lecture already referred to on “The characters of Moses, Jesus Christ, Martin Luther, and Owen.” Brindley and many of his friends were present.¹

But the clerical party soon found more powerful weapons. On June 11, 1840, Isaac Higginbottom and two others were summoned before the Borough Court at Manchester, on an information laid by the Rev. Mr. Kidd, Incumbent of St. Matthias' Church, and charged with having collected money from certain persons as the price of admission to a lecture given in the Hall of Science—for so the Socialist meeting-place was named. The information was laid under the Act 39 George III. c. 79, entitled “An Act for the more effectual suppression of Societies for seditious purposes.” Section 15 enacted: “Whereas divers places have of late been used for delivering lectures or discourses and of holding debates . . . which lectures, discourses and debates have in many instances been of a seditious or

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. IX., pp. 102, 103; Lloyd Jones, *Life*, pp. 369-71.

immoral nature . . . be it further enacted that any house, room, field or other place, at or in which any lecture or discourse shall be publicly delivered, or any public debate shall be held on any subject whatever . . . to which any person shall be admitted by the payment of money, shall be deemed a disorderly house within the intent and meaning of the said Act . . . unless the same shall have been previously licensed in the manner hereinafter mentioned." The licence mentioned was to be obtained at General, Quarter or Special Sessions. The penalty to be incurred by any one taking part in the unlawful proceedings was £20 for each offence.

On the behalf of the Socialists it was contended that an Act of 1817—the same which had been appealed to by the Bishop of Exeter—made an exception to the Act of 1799 as regards places of religious worship; and a certificate was produced, duly countersigned by the Registrar of the Bishop of Chester in accordance with the provisions of another Act (52 Geo. III. c. 155), in which Isaac Higginbottom and others "do hereby certify that the building called the Hall of Science in Camp Field, Manchester, is intended to be forthwith used as a place of religious worship by an assembly or congregation of Protestants called Rational Religionists."

The prosecution contended, however, that the certificate in question did not exempt the parties from the penalties of the Act of 1799; and in the event the magistrates, after much deliberation, concurred and gave judgment against the defendants. Notice was at once given to apply for a writ of *certiorari*, to remove the

case to the Court of Queen's Bench.¹ The Socialists further retaliated by applying for summonses against the Rev. Joseph Barker—the well-known anti-Socialist lecturer—and a Mr. Sturgeon for delivering lectures in unlicensed halls, and taking money for admission.²

Whatever may be thought of the taste and policy of the original prosecution, the clerical party were not without justification for their next step. The Socialists, it will be seen, when assailed, had defended themselves as being “a congregation of Protestants called Rational Religionists” assembled for religious worship.

The clerical party now called upon Robert Buchanan, father of the poet of that name, who had lectured in the Hall of Science, to make the declaration prescribed by the Act of 19 George III., entitled “An Act for the further relief of Protestant Dissenting Ministers and Schoolmasters.” The declaration prescribed by the Act ran as follows:—“I, A. B., do solemnly declare in the presence of Almighty God that I am a Christian and a Protestant, and, as such, that I believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, as commonly received among the Protestant Churches, do contain the revealed will of God, and that I do receive the same as the rule of my doctrine and practice.”

Refusal to make this declaration would involve heavy penalties for any repetition of the lecturing or teaching.

It was the contention of the prosecution that, as the Hall of Science had been registered as a place of worship belonging to a body of Protestant Dissenters, it was a

¹ The application was granted in the following November (*New Moral World*, Vol. VIII., p. 335). I have not been able to trace the result of the trial.

² *New Moral World*, Vol. VII., p., 1337.



From a contemporary newspaper, by permission of the Charity Organisation Society.

PROTESTANTISM *versus* SOCIALISM; OR, THE REVIVAL OF GOOD OLD TIMES.

fair inference that those who lectured or conducted the services there must be Dissenting Ministers or Schoolmasters as contemplated by the Act. The magistrates took this view—on the face of it not an unreasonable one—and in the exercise of the discretion conferred upon them by the Act¹ called upon Buchanan to make the declaration and take the oaths of supremacy and abjuration also prescribed by the Act. Buchanan declined to comply until he had received an authoritative explanation of the meaning of the terms “Protestant,” “Christian,” and “belief in the Scriptures.” Further, he professed himself unable to give a direct answer to the question whether he believed in a future state of rewards and punishment, and without this the magistrates held that he was unable to take the oath. In the event the defendant was fined £2 10s.²

It is to be noted that an editorial of this date in the *New Moral World* (July 4, 1840) expressly advocated the making of the declaration by Socialist lecturers on the grounds, first, that the words used were not to be interpreted literally, but with such latitude as the clergy in a recent debate in the House of Lords had claimed for themselves in subscribing to the 39 Articles; and, secondly, that “long and earnest study of the books to which reference is made has convinced us that they contain all the elements of Socialism, and that its political economy, its doctrines of justice, equality, and community of goods; its fraternity and charity; its opposition to

¹ The magistrates defended this exercise of their discretion on the express ground that it had been proved to them that Mr. Kidd's congregation had suffered pain and annoyance from the Socialist propaganda carried on among them.

² *New Moral World*, Vol. VIII., pp. 9, 18, 29, etc.

scribes and Pharisees, to priests and oppressors, may all be drawn from, defended, and supported by them."

An anonymous correspondent, who signs himself "A Missionary of the Protestant Dissenters commonly called Rational Religionists," justifies the making of the declaration on similar grounds.¹ Others, amongst whom was Mr. G. J. Holyoake, dissented strongly from this casuistical view, and defended honesty as the best policy in the long run.

In the event two only of the Missionaries made the declaration. Robert Buchanan, six weeks after his original refusal, came forward again before the magistrates at Manchester on August 11, 1840; professed his belief in a future state after death of rewards and punishments, made the declaration, subscribed the oaths, and became the Rev. Robert Buchanan.²

In February of the following year Lloyd Jones was summoned at Bristol to take the oath. "I attended," he writes, "at one o'clock for the purpose of taking the oath. The Office was crowded by gentlemen who seemed curious to see the performance. It passed off very comfortably. I took it without any words. I am now, therefore, the Rev. Lloyd Jones."³

There were at this time also prosecutions for blasphemy against the Socialists, of which three at least were successful. G. J. Holyoake, Charles Southwell and two

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. VIII., p. 39.

² *Sun* (London), August 14, 1840. The *Sun* does not mention Manchester, but it is clear from the name of the magistrate, Maude, that the proceedings took place in that city. See also Holyoake, *History of Co-operation*, Vol. I., p. 243. The incident is not apparently mentioned in the *New Moral World*.

³ *New Moral World*, Vol. IX., p. 118.

others, dissenting from the time-serving views advocated by G. A. Fleming in the *New Moral World*, issued an organ of their own—the *Oracle of Reason*. For an article in No. 4 of this periodical Southwell was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment and a fine of £100.¹ George Adams, the publisher of the *Oracle of Reason*, for a blasphemous article published in No. 25, which had apparently been written by Holyoake, received one month's imprisonment. Finally Mr. Holyoake, on his way to visit his colleague Southwell in prison, himself fell into the hands of the enemy. He gave a public lecture on "Home Colonisation, Emigration and the Poor Laws." At the conclusion of the lecture one James Bartram, who had been put up by the clerical party to entrap the lecturer, asked, "You have spoken of duty to man, what have you to say of duty to God?" It was open of course to Holyoake to refuse to answer a question which was not relevant to the subject of the lecture, especially as the animus underlying it was evident. But with characteristic fearlessness he refused to evade the issue, and replied—"I am of no religion at all. I do not believe in such a thing as a God. The people of this country are too poor to have any religion. I would serve the Deity, as the Government serves the subalterns—place him on half-pay."

A prosecution for blasphemy followed in this case also, and on August 15, 1842, Mr. Holyoake received a sentence of six months' imprisonment.²

The *New Moral World* appears to have observed a

¹ *New Moral World*, Dec. 25, 1841.

² *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life*, by G. J. Holyoake, Vol. I., pp. 141 seqq. See also *The Trial of G. J. Holyoake for Blasphemy*, from notes specially taken by Mr. Hunt. London, 1842.

prudent attitude in the face of these proceedings. In commenting on the prosecution of Southwell the editor writes :

“One sees much to regret and condemn in the conduct of both parties. We are no admirers of the spirit which prompts to violent attacks upon the opinions or prejudices of our fellow beings, for we know that they cannot avoid having these impressed upon their minds by the training they receive.”¹

But the pages of the *New Moral World* had not always been free from offence in this respect ; nor indeed, as already said, had Owen always been true to his own principles. Moreover, whether from mere wantonness or from lack of due consideration, many offensive, blasphemous and injurious things had been uttered by the Social Missionaries and other exponents of Socialism. Further, the Socialists, in the persons of Holyoake, Southwell and others, were closely associated with the Free-thought movement generally ; Socialist and Freethought publications were issued by the same firms, and lay side by side on the same counters. And when these publishers were prosecuted for the issue of some offensive attacks on religion, as was the case with Heywood, Cleave and Hetherington for the sale of *Haslam's Letters*, it was natural and not altogether unjust that part of the odium of the proceedings should attach also to the Socialist cause.² The persecution to which the Socialists were subjected for some years at the hands of the clerical party was not therefore without some justification. It was not difficult for an intolerant and unimaginative

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. X., p. 191.

² See *New Moral World*, Vol. VII., p. 1284, and Vol. X., p. 21.

Christian to suppose that Socialism aimed at subverting alike social order, morality and religion ; that its creed was mere blasphemy ; and its motive forces greed and lust.

But even at that time the Church was not fairly represented by such champions as Bishop Philpotts in Parliament and Brindley in the country. And nowadays assuredly the nobler spirits within the Church would have recognised that the Socialists stood for freedom of action, speech and thought, and because of the essential righteousness of the cause for which they fought, would have been ready to forgive them much random insolence and extravagance. And the champions of freedom in their turn would have learnt that the Church at its truest represented something more than superstition and priestly intolerance.

CHAPTER XXII

QUEENWOOD

ON Tuesday, October 1, 1839, the Society entered upon possession of a property of 533 acres at East Tytherly in Hampshire, about six miles from Stockbridge. The principal farm, which gave its name to the estate, was called Queenwood. The rent was £350 with a premium of £750, and the lease was to run for ninety-nine years.¹ The landowner was Sir Isaac L. Goldsmid. The following is a description of the estate given by Fleming, who paid a visit there in November of the same year, 1839.

“Our first visit was to the extra-parochial land (*i.e.* to the farm called Buckholt) upon which the Community Buildings are to be erected. They lie to the west of the farm-house, with a gentle declivity; the old Roman road from Sarum to Winchester passes through this portion of the estate. The spot selected as the site of the buildings has a beautiful exposure to the south; a fine grove of trees being situated at no great distance in front, and forming the foreground to a small richly wooded valley which opens beyond. The road to this will pass through a portion of the avenue formerly spoken of, after which it will wind through an open

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. VII., p. 1219 *bis*.

lawn or park, till it comes on a line with the Roman road. The buildings will be well sheltered from the north by the rising ground behind ; on the east they will be shut in by the avenue ; and on the west the scene stretches away among a succession of wooded valleys, till it rises into some hills of considerable altitude. Altogether, the selection seems a most felicitous one.

“ We again entered the avenue, and after proceeding southward along it for some time, we made a slight turn to the left, and were suddenly brought in view of a scene which far eclipsed all we had hitherto witnessed. It was a natural alley of yew-trees—the straight and polished stems of which shoot up to a considerable height, and then throw their branches across the road in such a manner as to form a close resemblance to the aisle of a Cathedral. It is scarcely possible to convey in words a correct idea of that beautiful walk ; the perspective effect is most striking. . . . Many aged and picturesque Yews are scattered over the surface of the estate, and will afford, under their ample shade, the most favourable opportunities for erecting seats and other conveniences either for study or recreation.”¹

Owen had been nominated by the previous Congress to act as Governor of the Community, but in a letter dated September 27, 1839, he resigns that office :

“ . . . It appeared evident to me that the branches

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. VI., pp. 921, 922.

and the more influential members of them are not yet prepared either with funds or experience for more than a preliminary Working Community adapted to the views and habits of the better conditioned of the working classes, and that the members of the various branches are too impatient to wait for the necessary accumulation of funds to commence a Community, according to my ideas of a Community calculated for the general population of a country. Under these circumstances I deem it necessary to decline acting as Governor of this preliminary Working Community, but being most desirous to see the condition of the working classes improved, and this preliminary attempt to succeed, I recommend that John Finch of Liverpool, Charles Frederick Green of London, and Heaton Aldam of Whalley, Derbyshire, be appointed by the Central Board to direct and manage the proposed Working Community under the general superintendence of the Board—promising at the same time to give these individuals, if they should be so appointed, such aid and advice as may be in my power when they require it.”

On this recommendation Finch was appointed Acting Governor and Aldam director of agricultural operations. The necessary capital to start the enterprise was found by the Society, partly from its accumulated funds, but chiefly, it would appear, in the form of subscriptions from the various branches; each branch which subscribed £50 being entitled to nominate one of its members to join the new Community. In addition to this, donations of various useful articles poured in from the branches and from private individuals. Month after month the *New*

Moral World prints a long list of many hundreds of articles presented to the Society—the presents being of the most multifarious kind, including, for instance, seventeen pairs of razors, a handbook of mathematics, a complete set of harness, a French grammar, *Horace, a Poem*, pocket-knives, a patent corkscrew, and implements innumerable for the stables, the farm, the shambles, the kitchen and the dining-room. Nothing, probably, could better illustrate the widespread interest and enthusiasm excited by the new venture than the unstinted flow of presents—many of them tools of a costly kind, the gifts of operatives who could not afford to testify their sympathy by any other means.

Mr. Aldam took the conduct of the venture at the outset, and the members entered upon their new domain as soon as formal possession was granted. Of the first members we learn from a letter of Mr. Aldam's.¹ He writes that there are few or no agricultural labourers amongst them, but he "does not consider it any drawback that we have not members who have been accustomed to farming work, for agricultural labourers in general are a localised, prejudiced, and stupid set of men . . . the present members having little knowledge of farming will of course be more ductile and easily formed into one grand body of co-operators." Mr. Aldam, as we are assured, was a practical and highly successful farmer.

In a few weeks, however, we find the Society appealing to the branches to send eighteen experienced men to Queenwood—three ploughmen, three hedgers

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. VI., p. 775.

and ditchers, carpenters and smiths—from which it may be inferred that freedom from prejudice was not in all cases found to compensate for lack of experience.¹

For the next few months we have very encouraging accounts from the Community at Queenwood. "Our days," Mr. Aldam writes, "are spent in united industry, our evenings in mutual improvement. . . . Our simple meals have the relish of good appetites and the charm of social conversation, and a generous strife pervades us as to who shall most promote the general happiness, and be most obliging and useful. Who that could see us early in the morning, washed and shaved, seated at our books reading or writing, then taking our wholesome meal of the nutritious products of the dairy; waiting after this till the grey mists of morning are dispelled to commence our united labours for the advancement of our delightful Colony—who could see all this, and say that we lived in a stye."² Some of the more enthusiastic residents even adopted a new chronology, dating from October 1, the day on which the Socialists entered into possession of the land. Thus a disciple writes to Owen from Broughton on "23rd, 5th month, year 1, N.M.W." (February 23, 1840).³

The *New Moral World* for February 22, 1840, gives the following time-table for the week, which explains Aldam's allusion to the early morning study.

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. VI., p. 830.

² *Ibid.*, p. 943. The "stye" is an allusion to a newspaper diatribe quoted a little lower down.

³ Manchester Collection. The new chronology would not seem to have been widely adopted.

| | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Mathematical Class . . . | 5.0—6.30 a.m. daily. | |
| Tea and Public Business . . | 5.0—6.30 p.m. daily. | |
| Monday | 6.30—8. p.m. | Dancing Class. |
| Tuesday | 6.30—8. p.m. | Drawing Class. |
| „ | 8.0 —9. p.m. | Grammar. |
| Wednesday | 6.30—8. p.m. | Agriculture and Botany. |
| „ | 8.0 —9. p.m. | Dancing. |
| Thursday | 6.30—8. p.m. | Instrumental Music. |
| Friday | 6.30—8. p.m. | Geography. |
| „ | 8.0 —9. p.m. | Elocution. |
| Saturday | 6.30—8. p.m. | Vocal Music. |

The time-table, it will be seen, does not include Sunday. No work was done on that day; but the members met in the new dining-hall “to hear the Gospel of peace and universal fraternity expounded.” The hall was thronged by an attentive audience, many of whom had come from a considerable distance to hear what the Socialists had to say for themselves. These proceedings, and the parody of a religious service as described by the Bishop of Exeter in his second speech in the House of Lords, naturally did not endear the Socialists to the neighbouring clergy. The new enterprise excited the bitter animosity of the Church and the Tories. The Bishop of Ripon preached against it, and the Bishop of Exeter spoke in Parliament against it. The neighbouring clergy got up petitions and wrote tracts against it. An organ of the party of law and order heralded its advent with the following sinister suggestion :

“We see it announced that the Socialists are about to establish an Epicurean sty, on a large scale, in Hampshire. We trust that popular indignation will

protect that fair corner, of this Christian isle from so hideous a pollution.”

But opposition from without was less serious than dissensions within. The members were content at the outset with the old farm buildings which they found on the spot, supplemented by a large new building which they erected themselves in the first few months, with a capacious dining-hall, which served also as a lecture room, below, and sleeping-rooms above. The dining-hall was enriched with stained-glass windows, and decorated inside with paintings and engravings.

But the original members had to endure considerable discomfort from inadequate house accommodation. Moreover, as indicated in the letter above quoted, they had been selected for quite other reasons than their fitness for agricultural pursuits. Most of them appear to have come from the northern manufacturing towns, having been delegated by the branches who contributed most largely to the funds, and were probably quite unused to life in the country and somewhat dismayed at the hardships involved, especially in the winter months. After the first brief period of enthusiasm and glowing fraternity, discontent broke out into something like open rebellion. Letters from Aldam, Fleming and others to the *New Moral World* in 1840 speak of enthusiasm having cooled, of deterioration of mental and moral health.¹ It was clear that there was a good deal of unpleasantness. There had been a plentiful lack of foresight at the outset ; too many people had been allowed to come, and the accommodation was clearly insufficient. Moreover, by an unlucky chance, Finch, the Deputy

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. VIII., pp. 24, 27, 136, etc.

Governor appointed in place of Owen, could not attend to his duties owing to ill health, and finally was forced to resign his position. At the meeting of Congress in May 1840, C. F. Green was elected in his stead.¹ A few months later Green found his position so difficult that he in turn resigned, and Rigby was, in October, 1840, installed as Governor in his place. For similar reasons Heaton Aldam, the first agricultural superintendent, had resigned his post in May, 1840, because of marked differences of opinion between him and the residents, and unfortunately the man deputed by Congress to take his place died in the course of the year.

The dissensions had become so acute in the middle of 1840 that C. F. Green, the then Governor, was instructed to take steps to reduce the membership. There were at the time fifty-seven residents at the colony—men, women and children. Some appear to have left of their own accord, others under the persuasion of the new Governor, and by the end of the summer the numbers were reduced to nineteen—eight men, four women and seven children of ten years old and under.² So matters appear to have continued until the spring of the following year. The twelve adult members worked in the dairy, the kitchen, and on the farm, their labours in the last-named region being supplemented by the services of some fifteen to twenty hired labourers. From the autumn of 1840 onward a schedule was published in each issue of the *New Moral World* showing week by week the occupation of each member of the Community and of the hired labourers. A hastily prepared and

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. VIII., p. 27.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. IX., p. 318.

preposterously sanguine balance sheet had been presented to the Congress of 1840, showing surplus assets of over £300. In the balance sheet made up six months later, this favourable balance had increased to £477. But in presenting the third balance sheet, for the period ending April 18, 1841, the auditors had to explain that this surplus had existed only on paper ; that its appearance was due mainly to two causes, an incorrect method of valuation, and the omission, through oversight, of a considerable number of debts. The audit now reveals a not inconsiderable deficit. The accounts are as follows :—

Balance Sheet of the Queenwood Community, April 18, 1841.

| <i>Dr.</i> | £ | s. | d. | <i>Cr.</i> | £ | s. | d. |
|--|--------|----|----|---|--------|----|----|
| To capital advanced by Central Board to date | 6,141 | 15 | 4 | Cash in hand | 120 | 9 | 5½ |
| Less money repaid to Members leaving | 60 | 0 | 0 | Sundry debtors | 49 | 7 | 11 |
| | <hr/> | | | Farming stock, crops, stores, furniture, etc. | 2,876 | 1 | 5 |
| To sundry creditors | 498 | 14 | 9 | Amount paid to fine down rent and for growing timber | 1,000 | 0 | 0 |
| | 6,081 | 15 | 4 | Total assets | 4,045 | 18 | 9½ |
| | <hr/> | | | Increased value of farm (at ordinary rate of estimating manure and labour expended), say £100 a year | 2,000 | 0 | 0 |
| | £6,580 | 10 | 1 | Balance | 533 | 8 | 8½ |
| | <hr/> | | | | <hr/> | | |
| | £6,580 | 10 | 1 | | £6,580 | 7 | 6½ |

It will be seen that the auditors estimate that the assets fall short of the liabilities by £533.

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. IX., p. 363. I quote the figures actually given in the *New Moral World*, but it is evident that some slight mistake has been made in the credit column.

But the Congress appointed a committee to comment on the auditors' report. And the committee put the facts in a more favourable light:—"There then remains £2,533 18s. 9d. which had been expended on the improvement of the farm, and has increased the value of the lease probably to the whole amount of this last sum . . . the assets also are evidently more than the £3,045 above stated."

The auditors, after careful examination of the kitchen accounts for the previous six months, found that the actual cost of maintenance of each adult person, exclusive of rent, was 7s. 1d. a week, made up as follows :

| | <i>s.</i> | <i>d.</i> |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------|
| Food | 4 | 7 |
| Fuel, candles and washing | 11 | |
| Clothing | 7 | |
| Pocket money | 1 | 0 |
| | <hr style="width: 100%;"/> | |
| | 7 | 1 |
| | <hr style="width: 100%;"/> | |

The committee expanded the table as follows :

| | <i>s.</i> | <i>d.</i> |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------|
| Tea and coffee | 4 | |
| Sugar | 7 | ½ |
| Butter | 7 | ½ |
| Bread | 1 | 4½ |
| Flesh meat | 1 | 3 |
| Clothing | 7 | |
| Fuel, candles, soap | 1 | 3½ |
| Pocket money | 1 | 0 |
| | <hr style="width: 100%;"/> | |
| | 7 | 1 |
| | <hr style="width: 100%;"/> | |

The amounts, it will be seen, agree in the sum, but $4\frac{1}{2}d.$ has, without reason given, been taken off the cost of food and put on to that of fuel, candles and soap.

The committee press for greater economy in the use of tea, coffee, sugar, flesh meat and butter, and recommend that the residents should as far as possible content themselves with the food actually produced from the farm.

Our confidence in the report of the committee, already to some extent shaken by the manipulation of the auditors' figures, is still further impaired by what follows. They furnish a statement of the estimated revenue and expenditure on the farm during the coming year, which includes an item of £350 for hired labour. Even after allowing interest on the £6,000 advanced at the absurdly low rate of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., the statement shows an estimated deficit on the year of £316. The comment on this financial statement is as follows :

“It is quite evident that the farm establishment has not been, and cannot at present be made, self-supporting. Some branches of industry must be added, a school must be opened, some boarders must be taken, or other means adopted, before the establishment can be made profitable to the Society ; and these objects cannot be attained without a further outlay is made for buildings and capital required for carrying on these operations. *We find also that the expense of employing hired labourers is greater than the charge of supporting our own members, even at the low wages given in Hampshire, averaging not more than eight shillings per week ; but this cannot be*

remedied until we have more buildings erected for the accommodation of our members.”¹

The hired labourers' wages are 8s. a week ; the adult member of the Community costs, including pocket money, only 7s. 1d.—there is therefore a clear saving of 11d. a week for each member employed in lieu of an outside labourer.

Such is the Socialist reasoning ; and that such a piece of arithmetic should have been put forward and accepted as sound finance goes far to explain the disaster of Queenwood, and indeed of all other Socialist schemes of the period. For it is scarcely necessary to point out that the labourer, out of his 8s. a week, fed, clothed and housed himself, a wife and children ; and the prospective gain of 11d. could only therefore be realised if all the Community labourers were bachelors, and content to live *al fresco*. But celibacy or obedience to the precepts of Malthus did not, as we have seen, enter into the Socialist rules of life ; and how far 11d. a week would go towards covering the omitted item of house rent may be guessed from the fact that the buildings ultimately erected at Tytherly cost £15,000, and that further large sums were spent in laying out the grounds and providing water, drainage, etc.

However, with a probable deficit on the year's working of the farm of some £300, all were agreed that other measures must be found to redress the balance, The question of a school, often previously discussed, was again raised : it was also suggested that boarders should be taken. A committee had been appointed in the

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. IX., p. 363.

previous year to recommend what trades should be started in the colony. Finally, Robert Owen, having announced his willingness to reside at Queenwood and take an active part in the management, was again elected Governor with practically unlimited powers, and also sole editor of the *New Moral World*. W. Galpin and H. Travis were elected respectively Vice-President and General Secretary.

To explain the choice of the Congress it should be stated that in the previous year, 1840, Robert Owen, William Galpin, F. Bate and others had formed a Society entitled "The Home Colonisation Society," with the object of providing funds for the Community experiment without too severely trenching upon the finances of the Central Board. The funds so accumulated were in large part contributed by Bate, William Galpin, and a few other wealthy sympathisers, and were lent to the Central Board on the most generous terms; their disposal was now by the vote of Congress placed almost absolutely at the discretion of the President and Governor. Owen at once commenced to use the powers entrusted to him. Hansom, architect of the Birmingham Town Hall, the young architect who seven years before had taken an active interest in the building strike in that town, was commissioned to erect buildings for the residents and for the proposed school on the most magnificent scale. The building, which was practically completed by the summer of 1842, was a stately structure, three stories high, and not unworthy of the beautiful site on which it was placed. Inside, as Mr. Holyoake tells us, it was finished with the most scrupulous care and thoroughness: "The laths which formed the partitions



By permission of the Charity Organisation Society, from a prospectus of Queenwood College.

HARMONY HALL, AFTERWARDS QUEENWOOD COLLEGE.

were of the best quality, and the nails used in the obscurest parts of the building were the best that could be had. There was nothing hidden that was mean and nothing exposed that was shabby. It is one of the pleasant recollections of the place that its directors endeavoured to make it honest throughout. Seven or eight hundred pounds were spent in making roads and promenades—handsome, spacious and enduring. The old Romans would have respected them. Even the kitchen and the basement rooms, used by members for evening meetings, were wainscoted with mahogany many feet high. Comfort and grace were consulted, as far as means permitted, in everything.”¹ It should be added that on the outside of the building were carved the letters “C. M.,” signifying “Commencement of the Millennium.”²

Owen further entered into negotiations for the lease or purchase of three adjoining farms—Great and Little Bentley and Rose Hill—thus increasing the Society’s holding to upwards of 1,000 acres.

In November, 1841, some of the residents, a little disturbed at the lavish expenditure, called in an outsider, J. R. Mann, a land agent from Norwich, to advise upon the general state of the farms and the prospects of the enterprise. Mann’s report—published as a supplement to the *New Moral World* of December 25, 1841—was entirely favourable. Upon the data thus obtained the committee drew up a balance sheet showing a prospective profit of £910 a year from the farming operations,

¹ *History of Co-operation*, Vol. I., p. 301.

² *New Moral World*, Vol. XIII., p. 519. *History of Co-operation*, Vol. I., p. 305.

and a further £750 profit from the establishment of a school with 200 scholars at £25 a year.

At the Annual Congress held in May, 1842, the prospect seemed hopeful. The Finance Committee reported that £18,963 had been expended on the property; and though they were unable to get a complete statement of accounts showing how the amount had been expended, a valuation which had been laid before them—the reference is no doubt to Mann's statement—showed that the property was of much greater value than the above figures represented. However, the General Fund of the Society and the publishing account of the *New Moral World* both showed a deficit; and the General Executive were empowered to consider the question of curtailing the amount spent on engaging Missionaries. In the event it was found necessary to discharge the whole of the paid Missionaries.¹

The Congress appears to have separated in a hopeful frame of mind. Two months later, however, in July, 1842, a special meeting of Congress was summoned by the Central Board to consider the state of the Tytherly finances. It appeared, to quote the Finance Committee's report, that "the Governor of Harmony had been proceeding with practical operations faster than the means of the Society would warrant, in consequence of which a considerable sum was now wanted to discharge present liabilities, to complete the new buildings and the furnishing of the same, and for the purchase of stock, &c., to improve the farm."²

In fact, as appeared from the statement of William

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. X., pp. 385-8.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. XI., p. 41.

Galpin, Owen had been given an absolutely free hand by those associated with him in the management of the funds, on the understanding that he should pay ready money, and should not incur any debts unless there were at hand the means to discharge them. Relying upon promises of pecuniary support which were never fulfilled, Owen had, it now appeared, committed the Society to a most embarrassing extent. There were pressing liabilities of upwards of £2,000, and urgent need for at least £3,000 more to complete what had already been begun. In the emergency, William Galpin, Bate and the other members of the Home Colonisation Society professed their readiness not only to waive any claim for the repayment of their loans at the present time, but to wait for payment of the interest until the Central Board should decide that the state of the funds would admit of its being paid.

Owen in a long speech justified his procedure, but resigned his post as Governor of the colony and editor of the *New Moral World*. He further stated that he would hold himself liable for the debts incurred until they should be discharged.

The Congress in reply unanimously voted a resolution exonerating Owen and the committee from blame :—

“That in the opinion of the Congress the present financial condition of the establishment in Hampshire has mainly arisen from the too great confidence of the Governor in the disposition of capitalists not immediately connected with the Society to advance capital for its purposes—which confidence induced him to press forward practical operations at a rate which exceeded the actual income and available funds of the Society. And the

Congress further consider that this result has been aided by the implicit and unbounded faith reposed in the late Governor by the principal Officers of the Society, which prevented them from exercising that judicious and prudent control over the expenditure of the funds which their uniform business-like and satisfactory conduct in other respects shows that under other circumstances, and but for such confidence, they would have felt it to be their duty to exercise."

The resolution went on to exonerate all concerned from "any intentional error," and to express the conviction of the Congress that the temporary difficulties would be soon removed by united and energetic effort.¹ Finally John Finch was re-elected Governor; and the Congress in a special report, after dwelling upon the fact that nearly £30,000 had already been expended on the Community, urged the members by all means in their power to aid in procuring the £5,000 more which alone was needed to bring the experiment to a happy issue.

At this time (August, 1842) advertisements began to appear in the *New Moral World* of the Boarding House and Educational Establishment at Harmony Hall, Hants. The terms for the school, the arrangements for which were nearly completed, were fixed at £25 a year, including clothing. The *Morning Chronicle* of December 13, 1842, contains a long letter from an agricultural expert signing himself "One who has Whistled at the Plough,"² containing an account of

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XI., p. 53.

² He was, as we learn from Lloyd Jones (*Life of Robert Owen*, p. 404), one Alexander Somerville, an agent of the Anti-Corn Law

a visit to Harmony Hall, as it was now known. After relating that he received from the neighbours a good report of the Socialist manners and morals, he proceeds :

“When we reached the turnip field, I remarked to my friend that, if these were ‘Socialist turnips,’ they promised well. They were Socialist turnips, and we soon after found seven hundred Socialist sheep, which made my friend exclaim, ‘Lord bless me! who would have thought it?’

“Winding down a gentle declivity, we saw a red three-storied brick building, near some large forest trees. These trees seemed the commencement of a wooded district which contrasted pleasantly with the naked country we had travelled over from Salisbury. As we approached the red brick house we could observe that its outward form was tasteful, and all its proportions substantial. It stood about fifty yards to our right, while on the left was a farmyard, old and uncomfortable-looking, with some ricks of wheat, waggons, pigs and cattle. Adjoining the farmyard was a new house, which might have been taken at first view for the respectable residence of a substantial farmer. This we found was built as a temporary residence for those members who arrived previous to the large house being built.”

They then entered the large building, Harmony Hall, and were shown over the premises by Atkinson, the secretary.

“We descended to the basement floor, which, on

League. His letters to the *Chronicle* were reprinted by the Socialists as a pamphlet under the heading “A Journey to Harmony Hall.” It is from this pamphlet that the quotations in the text are taken.

the other side of the house, looked out on a level with a lawn partly in process of formation. On this floor there were several large apartments ; one of them a dining-room. Dinner was just over, and as a finale to it, the members were singing in full chorus a beautiful piece of solemn music. We were not asked to go into their presence, but we went to the kitchen, after examining an excellent piece of machinery, which, through a tunnel, conveyed the dishes and the dinner from the kitchen to the door of the dining-hall. A boy, who was passing, showed us how it worked, and presently several other boys appeared. All of them were so clean and neat in their clothes, so healthy in their appearance, and at the same time so respectful in their manners to us and to each other, that I could not help staying behind to talk with and look at them.

“In the kitchen there were three or four women, with a very large assortment of dishes to wash. I do not know what the dinner had been, but judging from the refuse of bits and scraps, which seemed to me to tell more of abundance than economy, I supposed they had all got enough of it. The women in the kitchen were like all the others, tidy and respectable in appearance. The only thing that puzzled me was how they should be so well as they were, with such prodigious piles of plates, washed and unwashed, around them. I can say nothing adequately descriptive of the fittings of this kitchen. At Broughton I was told that the London architect—who superintended the erection of the whole—said that there were very few kitchens so completely and expensively fitted up as it in London. I

am sorry to say that such is to all appearance, and by all accounts, the case.

“Outside the kitchen there were commodious wash-houses, cellarage, baths, and a well-arranged place for each member to wash himself as he comes from his work before going to meals.

“Ascending again to the next floor we entered a ball-room, and going upstairs we saw the sleeping rooms, all as conveniently arranged as can be under one roof. Upon the whole the house is commodious, but I was much disappointed at seeing such a house. A village of cottages, each with a garden, would surely have been more appropriate for a working community, and much cheaper; the sum expended on this building, not yet half furnished, is said to exceed £30,000.¹ Such extravagance, previous to cultivating the land, would stagger most people on the question of the sagacity of the working bees.

“Mr. Atkinson conducted us to the new garden, which contains twenty-seven acres. I was then introduced to a Mr. Scott, the chief gardener, whom I found to be an intelligent and thoroughly practical man. His operations of trenching and planting, and indeed gardening in every department, were extensive. Brick-makers were making bricks; builders were building; lime-burners were burning lime; road-makers were making roads; the shepherds were with the sheep; nine ploughs were at work; a hundred acres of wheat were already sown, and more wheat land was being prepared. A reservoir was being constructed to save all the liquid manure; and in short, everything was being done to

¹ The actual sum, as already said, was just £15,000.

improve the land which industry and capital could accomplish, and skill direct.

“Mr. Scott was having portions of some of the fields trenched with the spade. He paid the labourers £5 per acre for it, and expected them to work so as to make two shillings a day. I remarked that this was more wages than common. He said it was ; they only gave the ploughmen and other day labourers nine shillings a week ; but as it was scarcely possible to get a good workman in that part of the country, he allowed a higher rate of wages to get them to work with some spirit. In answer to a remark I made about proselytising their workmen to Socialism, he replied that they never made any attempt ; but if they did attempt it, he believed anything might be accomplished, any change might be effected, but a change in the old slovenly style of working ; on that point he believed the present generation of Hampshire labourers to be incurable. . . .

“There is some fine wood on the ground, and an avenue of fine old yews, which, for beauty and extent, is perhaps not equalled in any other part of England. The community intend converting a portion of that avenue into a summer ball-room. Adjoining, are large numbers of full-grown trees, resembling the shape and size of the main-mast of a man-of-war.”

In a second letter, dated December 23, the writer adds :

“The Bishop of Exeter exposed [the Socialists] in his own peculiar way ; and many newspapers have represented them as defunct ; but they are still in existence, and growing in importance every day. The people in the neighbourhood dreaded them when they

THE FOUNDER
AND
OF SOCIALISM.



ROBERT OWEN.

THE PATRON



THE BISHOP OF EXETER.

From a contemporary lithograph published at Manchester, reproduced by permission of the Charity Organisation Society.

came at first, but now they respect them. They are bringing from all parts of the kingdom the best improved implements and methods of working ; the scattered facts of well-authenticated experiments they are collecting from all the improved agricultural districts, and introducing them to a part of the kingdom eminently defective, and, in those respects, neglected. Amid a poor population they are creating and enjoying wealth ; amid an ignorant population they are dispensing education ; amid an imperfectly employed population they are spreading employment ; amid a population not remarkable for correct moral conduct, they are showing themselves as an example which compels the respect of all who know them, and who at first distrusted them. If their principles be as dangerous to society as has been often said, what is to be done to counteract them ? The anathema of the Bishop neither sinks their thousand acres in the sea, nor sets a blight upon their crops."

As a pendant to this description from an outsider we may quote from the letter of "A Twelve-Years Socialist," who paid a visit to Harmony Hall in December of the same year, 1842. On his first sight of the house he cries, "Behold the promised land ! One's breath is stopped for a moment ; but life hurries on, else would we stop a century, here on this spot, to contemplate the grand ideal of human existence therein embodied, or partially developed. Mind of Owen ! we recognise your benignant presence." After describing the house, the dancing and general festivities, he gives us a glimpse of breakfast before the dawn. He enters the refectory : "Breakfast is laid ; for some minutes I have heard a whirr, as of machinery—it whirrs again—the kitchen

railway! A train has just arrived at the mouth of the dark tunnel, bringing coffee urns and buttered bread. . . . 'What, coffee without cream in a farmhouse? Not even milk?' 'No; we are short of cows.' Well, let us be patient, Rome was not built in a day. The bread is excellent, the talk friendly. No one seems to think of what there is not; we are decidedly materialists."

Of dinner he writes:

"The railway is again in requisition; puddings and dainty vegetables form the bulk of the supply; meat seems not much in estimation. I take apple-pudding—nothing can be finer; afterwards some cauliflower with sauce, a turnip nicely prepared, or potato moulded into tempting shapes, and home-baked bread, more satisfying than beef. Yes, such a choice of dishes settles at once the question of a meat diet."¹

The Socialists, however unwisely they may have spent their money, did not waste it in riotous living. Throughout the experiment a large proportion of the inmates appear to have been vegetarians; and in the last stage, when strict economy was the order, tea and coffee were cut off as well as milk and meat.

The new buildings, as will be seen from the accounts quoted, were pushed forward rapidly, and at the Congress of May, 1843, the Central Board were able to announce that the schools were already in working order, and to invite the members of Congress to inspect the classes. There were sixty-one pupils, of whom thirty-five were paying fees, the remainder being children of the residents of the colony. Moreover, the Rose Hill Boarding House was open, under the management of

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XI., p. 229.

the secretary, James Atkinson. There were at the time forty-three adult members in residence—viz. thirty men and thirteen women. Upwards of eight hundred acres were under cultivation. But the only trades in operation were those of blacksmith, carpenter, bricklayer, etc., and the work of the operatives was entirely absorbed by the needs of the Community itself. From the balance sheet it appeared that £11,667 3s. 0d. had been remitted in cash to Harmony during the year ended March 31, 1843, and that £214 13s. 5d. had been received from thence. The committee were of opinion that £8,000 more were required for the completion of the existing buildings and the erection of a dairy, a new farmstead, another boarding-house, and the equipment of workshops and a printing establishment. If this money could be raised, the number of residents increased to two hundred and sixty or three hundred, and hired labour dispensed with as soon as practicable, the experiment ought soon to be in a flourishing condition. Owen further urged, as means to this desirable end, the taking of Great Bentley Farm, which could, he was satisfied, be worked more cheaply by the Society than by any outsider; and the equipping of an industrial school for a thousand children at £12 or £13 a head.¹

There were some complaints from the residents that they were not given a share in the government of the colony; there was some murmuring also at recent measures of economy. It appeared that the supply of cheese at supper had been discontinued, so that the meal now consisted of bread and water only. Also the Sunday's dinner, in order to save labour for the

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XI., pp. 360, 415, 416, 436.

women, consisted simply of coffee and bread and butter. But on the whole goodwill and hopefulness marked the proceedings.

In the early summer of 1843 Finch went to America, and Owen resumed the post of Governor of Harmony. About the same time W. Galpin, who had been appointed General Secretary at the preceding Congress, and had ultimately become Vice-President, resigned his position.¹

The year 1843 was marked by the issue of a prospectus, signed by Owen as President, and by the Central Board, inviting the public to subscribe, not £8,000, the amount estimated at the last Congress as required to complete the equipment of the enterprise, but £25,000. In this was included a sum of £7,500 for building and furnishing an Industrial School for five hundred children, in addition to more furniture, etc., for the school already in existence. Up to this date—August, 1843—as explained in the prospectus, £30,000 had already been expended upon Harmony, made up as follows:—

| | |
|---|----------------------|
| | £ |
| Subscriptions to the Community Fund, represented by non-convertible script | 4,477 |
| Ordinary loans bearing interest at the rate of £400 yearly | 9,112 |
| Loans of Home Colonisation Society, on which no interest was payable until all other engagements were met | 12,967 |
| Donations and unclaimed money. | 3,500 |
| | <hr/> |
| | £30,056 ² |
| | <hr/> <hr/> |

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XII., p. 2.

² *Ibid.*, p. 55.

It was estimated that after paying interest at the rate of 5 per cent. on £28,000 of the old capital, and on £25,000 now to be raised—£2,650 a year in all—there would remain a clear profit of £1,200 a year, to be applied to the purposes of the Society.

In the event, about £1,900 was actually subscribed in response to the prospectus.¹ The only fresh undertaking of importance, therefore, actually carried through during the year 1843-4 was the taking of Great Bentley Farm on a lease for ninety-nine years from Michaelmas, 1843.

There were in May, 1844, ninety-four children in the schools, of whom sixty-four were paying fees. The school course included, besides the usual routine, geography, astronomy, history ancient and modern, chemistry, anatomy and physiology, drawing, painting in oils, vocal and instrumental music, geometry, land surveying, French and German. The fees remained at £25 a year, including clothes, and it was not thought at present advisable to reduce them.²

Such was the state of affairs when the Congress met on May 10, 1844, at Harmony Hall. There had been for some time indications that the Provincial Branches were no longer in complete harmony with the Central Board. The erection, in the larger towns, of Halls of Science had absorbed most of the spare money of the members, and subscriptions had come in more slowly than before. There had been some friction and misunderstanding about the arrangements for the residents; there had been in the course of the five

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XII., p. 378.

² *Ibid.*, p. 390.

years two or three processes of purgation, and the members who had left, of their own accord or under strong processes of suasion, had no doubt helped to increase the dissatisfaction. The funds at the disposal of the Central Board, too, had for some time been almost wholly diverted to the upkeep of the Queenwood experiment. At the Congress of 1842, in view of the state of the general funds, it had been found necessary, as already said, to discharge all the Missionaries, and the spread of the Society's work was therefore left for a time entirely to volunteers or to local enterprise.¹

At the Congress of the following year, 1843, great dissatisfaction had been expressed at this arrangement ; it was represented that there was urgent need of Missionaries to continue the propaganda, and that the interests of the branches were being wholly sacrificed to the advancement of the Hampshire experiment. In the event Messrs. Lloyd Jones and Joseph Smith were appointed Missionaries for the ensuing year.² But the discontent with the policy of Congress was kept alive. Probably the election of Owen for a second term of office as Governor, and the extravagant promises held out in his prospectus issued in the preceding August, brought the uneasiness and dissatisfaction of the provincials to a climax. At any rate at the opening of the Congress of 1844 it was evident that a new spirit was abroad. It had at previous Congresses been the custom for Owen, as President and Founder of the Society, to take the chair. On this occasion he was absent at the first

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XI., p. 53.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 411, 425.

meeting, and Joseph Smith, the delegate for Oldham, moved that John Finch be elected Chairman of Congress. The motion was seconded by James Nockles, delegate for Glasgow. Fleming and Bate urged that it would be "a fatal departure from courtesy" not to elect Owen to the position. Smith, Nockles, and others replied that Owen would not be a suitable Chairman on the occasion: he was always intolerant of opposition and frequently showed much irritation at the expression of opinions differing from his own. On this account, and because of the respect and affection which they had for him, some persons would rather keep silence than express disagreement with Owen's views. Moreover, on this occasion Owen's own conduct of the Harmony enterprise would probably be called in question, and it would be painful for him as well as for them that he should preside over the discussion. Eventually the new men carried the day, Finch was elected Chairman, and Congress proceeded with its deliberations.¹ Towards the end of the sittings, on May 27, Owen—who had apparently up to this point absented himself from the meetings—came forward and announced that he could not consent to have his actions, whether as President of the Rational Society, or as Governor of Harmony, fettered by the resolutions passed by Congress—"He could not accept office in connection with the Society, unless he could have free authority to act as circumstances rendered it necessary, without reference to previous resolutions of Congress. If they desired his services it would be necessary for

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XII., p. 377.

them to rescind the resolutions which they had passed.”¹

The position thus created was a painful one for all concerned. Apart from the respect and loyalty due to Owen as the founder and for so long the President of the Society, his name and character still stood for much with their own members and with the world outside; and it seemed certain that the Society would lose many supporters if Owen ceased, under such circumstances, to act as their head.

But the Congress felt that it was impossible to submit to a dictatorship of this kind, and Owen's resignation was unanimously accepted. Mr. David Vines, the Vice-President—then in London—was elected President in Owen's room. But Vines refused to take office in the circumstances. Eventually Mr. John Buxton, one of the delegates from Manchester, was elected President and Governor of Harmony, nine voting for him, and five, including Lloyd Jones, A. Campbell and F. Bate, against.

On the new President nominating the Board of Directors, G. A. Fleming declined to serve, and F. Bate resigned the position of Treasurer. The Board consisted therefore almost entirely of new and untried men. The resignation of Bate left it also to consist entirely of men who had but a very small pecuniary stake in the Society. The new Board had contributed between them to Community Funds less than £200; the old Board represented contributions of more than £13,000, of which Owen had contributed £737 and Bate £12,150.² It is a striking

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XII., p. 402

² *Ibid.*, Vol. XIII., p. 340.

proof of the unworldliness of the Socialists and their mutual confidence that such an arrangement should have been possible. Nor, it should be added, was that confidence abused. The new men, who had captured the Congress and with it the government of Harmony, were perfectly honourable and straightforward in their dealings, besides being much better men of business than their predecessors.¹ And even from the standpoint of high finance their proceedings were not wholly indefensible. They probably represented the views of the great majority of the poorer members and small shareholders who had contributed in subscriptions and small loans nearly £9,000.² It is no disparagement of the generosity of Frederick Bate, who had given upwards of £12,000—all that he had—to point out that these contributions from working men and others represented in the aggregate a far larger sum of personal sacrifice for the common cause.

It was indeed no enviable task upon which the new management entered in May, 1844. The extravagant buildings were still incomplete in themselves, and incompletely furnished; the gardens and roads were unfinished; the farms had been starved—more horses and cows, more manure and more labour were needed; also more machinery and implements; the trades in the establishment could not be developed for want of the necessary capital. The balance sheet for the year ended March 31, 1844, showed a heavy loss on

¹ See Holyoake, *History of Co-operation*, Vol. I., p. 306—"Mr. John Buxton, the new Governor, was a man of honesty and courage." See also Lloyd Jones, *Life of Robert Owen* (edition of 1900), p. 412; Lloyd Jones himself took part in the proceedings of Congress as delegate for Bolton.

² *New Moral World*, Vol. XIII., p. 376.

would be in a very proud position." In the expenditure of the establishment no account has been taken of the "sum paid for hired labour, which has hitherto been a large item, but which it is intended to reduce to a great extent."¹

If we briefly examine the estimate, we find on the side of *Income* that the committee estimate (1) that all the arrears of school fees will be paid, and all the fees for the next year paid in full, and (2) that the farm will produce considerably more than double the amount produced in the preceding year. On the *Expenditure* side they allow practically the same amount for house expenses as in the preceding year; they allow only £1,123 for manure, seed and all improvements on the farms; and they omit altogether the item of hired labour, which represented in the preceding year an expenditure of about £1,300. The explanation of this omission is that Congress had recommended that hired labour should as far as possible be replaced by the labour of their own members; and, as all the existing members were fully employed, that about one hundred fresh members should be introduced for the purpose. But no allowance, it is to be observed, is made in the estimates even for the food and living expenses of these additional members, much less for the considerable expenditure for furniture and fittings which would be entailed.

It was left for the sharp criticism of experience to point out the fallacies of the estimate. Here is an account of the actual expenditure for the year ended March 31, 1845.

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XII., p. 403.

in the estimate, of £750 on the farm : the expenditure on the house has exceeded the estimate by nearly £300. In fact, the excess in this last case is only apparent ; for of the total of £2,295 shown as spent on the house, £679 represents repayment of old debts ; the current house expenses for the year were less, therefore, than the estimate by nearly £400—a result no doubt due to the more rigid economy practised, as well as to diminished numbers of pupils and visitors. It appeared further that the debts had been underestimated by the old management ; they actually amounted at the beginning of the financial year 1844-5 to over £2,500, or about £600 more than the estimate.

It is clear that the enterprise is in a bad way. The Governor reported that a recent valuation showed the total liabilities—loans, shares and current debts—to amount to just under £40,000, and the property—buildings, machinery, crops and stock—to be worth less than £26,000, leaving a deficit of more than £14,000.¹ Moreover the revenue is decreasing ; the landlord is pressing for arrears of rent, and other creditors are becoming importunate. A Select Committee appointed by Congress to enquire further into the matter found that £10,000 was wanted to provide the additional buildings, stock, manure, etc., needed to put the farm into proper order, and unless this sum can be provided, and provided at once, they recommend the Society by some means to find tenants for the farm, or otherwise dispose of their interest.²

At a Special Congress held at the John Street In-

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XIII., p 399.

² *Ibid.*, p. 441.

stitution in July it was decided to take all available means to wind up the affairs of the Society. Of the trustees originally appointed—Messrs. Finch, Green and Clegg—the first-named, the only one of the three who had of recent years taken any active interest in the Harmony enterprise, was now absent in America. Moreover the deed appointing them as trustees had never been executed, and it seemed doubtful, therefore, whether these gentlemen had any legal standing. In this ambiguity the Congress resolved to appoint three assignees, of whose capacity and readiness to act they were assured, and in the event Buxton, Bate and Pare were chosen.¹

On July 11, three days before the meeting of the Special Congress which thus pronounced the doom of the Community, the residents at Harmony Hall were holding high festival. The usual monthly Family Tea Party and Ball had been deferred in order to give a welcome to Owen on his return from the United States. After tea was over, and the customary Social hymn had been sung, Owen gave an address, in which he dwelt upon the wonders of the new “electric magnetic telegraph.” He then publicly named two children belonging to the Community, and after joining in the Grand March and the first Country Dance retired to rest. By the rest of the company “the festive song and the airy dance” were kept up alternately until after midnight.² But this was probably the last Social festival at Harmony Hall. The assignees set about the business of winding up the Society’s affairs without delay. On August 20, 1845, the *New Moral World*, after an

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XIII., pp. 465, 477.

² *Ibid.*, p. 459.

unsuccessful claim by G. A. Fleming, the late editor, to the title and goodwill of the paper, was purchased by one James Hill, who for some months ran it partly in the interests of the remnants of the Rational Society in London, partly in those of the National Land and Building Association. Ultimately the title appears to have been changed into that of the *Commonweal*.¹

The leases of Great and Little Bentley Farms were advertised in the *New Moral World* of August 6, and the latter farm, containing about two hundred acres arable and pasture, was at once taken over by Messrs. Galpin and Ironside, the delegate for Sheffield, who carried with them the majority of the remaining residents from the parent Community. Buxton, in his capacity of assignee, together with his wife and family remained in occupation of the deserted buildings until the following June, when the estate was finally disposed of. The other residents appear to have gradually melted away, and the enterprise may be said to have ended with the summer of 1845.

Of other Land Colonisation experiments of the period little need be said. Feargus O'Connor's National Land scheme, for forming small colonies of peasant proprietors throughout the country, though it no doubt owed something to Owen's teaching and example, was not a Socialist scheme at all, since it contemplated individual cultivation and individual ownership. Two or three other communistic schemes, however, were actually started at about the same time as the Queenwood experiment. In the beginning of 1840 the "Society of United Friends," a Liverpool organisation with John Moncas as President, took the lease of a farm in Wales, of some

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XIII., p. 540.

700 acres, and commenced work on it forthwith. The capital was to be provided by subscriptions from the members—£12 for each man and £8 for each woman. Children under eighteen were to be admitted free, their labour going to the Society, and aged parents of members were to pay £5 each. It is obvious that the proposed capital was quite insufficient, and the arrangements for the admission of the young and the old would have imposed an intolerable burden upon the Society. It further appeared that the land chosen for the experiment was quite unsuitable, consisting mostly of barren hillside, stony ravine or peat swamp. Forty acres of land were actually cultivated, “and even this small quantity is interspersed with rocks and large heaps of stones; and the greater part of it is so steep that the horses can scarcely draw the empty plough up.”¹ The enterprise appears to have been soon abandoned.

Another experiment, the Manea Fen Colony, started with greater promise of success, and did in fact run for about two years. The experiment was a private speculation on the part of one William Hodson, who found the land and much of the capital and elected himself Governor of the Community for five years. Hodson attended the Congress of May, 1840, and delivered a lecture to the Rational Society on the proper way—his way—of founding a Community. He explained that during the previous year there had been an average of 20 individuals at Manea Fen, that they had built 24 small houses and some workshops, and had greatly improved the land. Further, they had set up a printing

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. VIII., p. 84. See also Vol. VII., pp. 1161, 1215, 1210 (*bis*), 1248 (*bis*), 1282 (*bis*), etc.

press, and published their own paper, *The Working Bee*, which ran from July, 1839, to January, 1841. Hodson proposed that the Rational Society should join forces with him ; that Manea Fen should be mainly agricultural and Queenwood mainly an educational Community. The proposition was discussed at considerable length, but the wiser heads in the Rational Society distrusted both the man and his methods, and it was eventually decided to take no steps in the direction of co-operation for the present. In February of the following year, 1841, the experiment came to a disastrous end. Hodson forcibly took possession of the property, and turned the colonists out in the cold.¹

The reader who has followed with attention the history of the enterprise at Queenwood will hardly need to have the causes of the failure pointed out to him. At no time, to use an expressive Americanism, did the scheme begin to be practical. Owen, as we have seen, dissociated himself from the enterprise at the commencement on the ground mainly that the funds subscribed were not sufficient. But if the quarter of a million which Owen required had been forthcoming, it is practically certain that the catastrophe, if longer deferred, would have been even more complete. And for the actual disaster Owen himself was mainly responsible. His ideas were altogether on too large a scale ; as Ironside wrote in 1845 of Owen's governorship, "If the thing

¹ See *New Moral World*, Vol. V., p. 297 ; Vol. VII., pp. 1161, 1271 (*bis*) ; Vol. VIII., p. 374 ; Vol. IX., pp. 25, 115, 118. The article in Vol. V. (March 2, 1839), written at the outset of the experiment, solemnly warns Socialists against joining in the enterprise, and is evidently inspired by a distrust of Hodson personally.

See also Holyoake, *History of Co-operation*, Vol. I., pp. 288-90.

had gone on a few years longer, Mr. Owen would have had all the estates between Queenwood and Southampton.”¹ Owen spent enormous sums on buildings which were never completed ; and added farm to farm when the money in hand was never sufficient to admit of even one farm being worked to profit. Throughout the experiment the Central Board pointed out year by year that the number of horses was insufficient to work the land ; that the cattle should be considerably increased in number ; that more money was needed for manure, for implements, for drainage, etc. In fact the deficit on the working of the farm in the most favourable year—1843—exceeded £1,100 ; and in the whole period from the commencement of the experiment in October, 1839, down to December, 1844, the total expenditure on the farms—exclusive of the heavy cost of the buildings—amounted to no less a sum than £14,918, whilst the gross revenue during the same period amounted to £4,924 only—a net deficit of £10,000 in a little over five years. If the farms had been debited with their proportionate share of the cost of the buildings in which were housed some of those who worked on the land, and of the cost of the roads and other conveniences, this deficit would have been much larger.²

In the same way the house, as we have seen, was built on the most lavish scale, and with all the latest sanitary improvements. So costly were the buildings, indeed, that Buxton and his colleagues calculated that

¹ Letter to Sir I. L. Goldsmid, *New Moral World*, Vol. XIII., p. 341.

² Full tables of the expenditure are printed in the *New Moral World*, Vol. XIII., p. 324.

in 1844, the last year of Owen's management, at a time when the school fees were £25 a year, and even that sum was only required from those who could afford to pay it, and as we have seen, was not always forthcoming, the net cost to the Society of each pupil boarded and educated in the schools was £29 1s. a year; and even in the following year, when the expenses had been greatly reduced—mainly by the summary process of dismissing the trained teachers, and employing members of the Community in their stead—the annual cost was £21 10s. 3d. a head, and the annual fees, when paid, appear to have been only £20.¹

There was never sufficient capital to work any of the trades, even that of printing, so as to afford a fair chance of yielding a profit. But if the capital had been forthcoming, there is no manner of doubt that the issue, at any rate under the earlier management, would have been the same. The principle which governed all the undertakings of the Society receives its most conspicuous illustration in the proposal made at each succeeding Congress to employ for the farm as far as possible their own residents instead of hired labourers—a proposal sincerely made and supported in the interests of economy. In other words, in a place where the skilled labourer housed, clothed and fed himself and a wife and family on 8s. a week, it was thought an economical measure to suggest paying the untrained labourer a guinea a week² and lodging him rent free in a palace.

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XIII., p. 368.

² This sum represents the maintenance, given as 7s. 1d. each weekly, of a man and his wife; and of two children whose maintenance is reckoned as equivalent in cost to that of one adult. From some tables prepared by the last Board of Management it appears that the actual

But before we pass judgment on the whole enterprise of Harmony as a senseless or even criminal absurdity, it is necessary to endeavour to realise the mental attitude of those who conducted it and those who supported it. The working men of the period, as we have already seen, whether Chartists, Anti-Corn Law Leaguers, or Socialists, were convinced that a part of the gross product of their labour which was variously estimated at any proportion from three-fourths to nineteen-twentieths was somehow, whether by conscious fraud, or by the silent operation of an unjust social system, diverted from their pockets into those of the landlords, the master manufacturers and the idle rich generally. Owen had assured His Majesty King William IV. that the twenty-five millions of men inhabiting these islands could readily, with the aid of modern mechanical and chemical inventions, supply by their labour the needs of six hundred millions. In the ideal Community sketched out by Owen all the material wants of the Society were to be satisfied by the labour of the children and youth, who would find in that labour merely a pleasant relaxation from the more strenuous engagements of an encyclopædic education. One of Owen's latest converts, James Braby, had, as we have seen, calculated that a colony of five hundred persons, men, women and children, working one thousand acres of land, might be expected to produce a clear profit of £3,000 a year (see above p. 458 note).

cost—allowing for rent and maintenance of buildings, furniture, etc.—was in 1844, under Owen's last governorship, £37 9s. 8d. a year for an adult and £19 8s. for a child. In 1845, partly from the increased number of residents amongst whom the rent charge was divided, partly because of a more stringent economy in food and clothing, this expenditure was reduced to £27 1s. and £16 11s. 9d. a year respectively. (*New Moral World*, Vol. XIII., p. 368.)



Photo by L. Ehremayer, Ealing.

ROBERT OWEN.

From a plaster medallion by Miss Beech.

When the enormous surplus out of which the labourers were thus yearly cozened by an immoral social system was restored to the rightful owners there would be enough and to spare for all purposes of use and of enjoyment. In such circumstances palatial buildings, mahogany wainscoating, evening dances and concerts, flower gardens and convenient roads represented not extravagance but judicious expenditure.

Again, the Socialists believed that in Owen himself they had a leader who ranked amongst the foremost of the world's captains of industry. Had he not, as he himself had repeatedly told them, worked his way up, by his own skill and foresight, from poverty to wealth; had he not, by his prudent management, made enormous fortunes for himself and his partners at New Lanark? It was only after the experiment had gone on for some years that "the conviction gradually came upon the minds of nearly all, that Mr. Owen was no financier, and had no idea of money."¹

Such was the economic position as it presented itself to the Community of Harmony. But it is scarcely necessary to point out that the enterprise did not primarily present itself as an economic question at all. Those uncouth hymns to Community, those exhilarating balance sheets, with their confident appeal from the niggardliness of the past to the generosity of the coming years, the mystic "C.M." carved over the doorway, the triumphant new chronology—all these were the genuine expressions of an aspiration after a better social order which had but little of the selfish or the sordid. An ideal which found its embodiment in a life of well-fed unlaborious

¹ Letter from Ironside to Goldsmid, *New Moral World*, Vol. XIII., p. 340.

content would not perhaps stimulate to great enterprises. But the ease and plenty to which the Socialists aspired were not for themselves alone ; they looked for nothing less than the regeneration of the whole effete system of society—with all its struggles and misery, its stunted bodies and starved lives, its countless sum of futilities and degradations. The ideal of life in a Community stood for the Socialists in place of a religion, and they set themselves to realise it with something of the religious recklessness of material conditions. What is the worth of an ideal which does not drive men at least to attempt the impossible ? Who would be so craven as to count the cost, when salvation, if only mundane salvation, for themselves and their fellows depended upon their courage and enthusiasm ?

Thus Mr. John Cramp, the last Secretary of the Congress, writes from Harmony Hall in August, 1845, when the colony was already broken up and the buildings deserted, "I can scarcely persuade myself that this is a reality. I look back on what we have been, and what we are ; we were a Society united for the holiest of purposes ; we had a leader in whom we reposed the most unbounded confidence—nay, by many of us he was almost worshipped, and all were ready to follow to the death for the accomplishment of our object . . . and now we are disjointed, cast down and powerless. A spirit of discord has been among us, and blown our strength and our purpose to the winds, and, in the day of our adversity, those who should have been the truest friends to our cause are sacrificing the Society to individual interest."¹

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. XIII., p. 505.

The writer's lament, it will be seen, is all for the cause that had been betrayed. And this temper, with one or two exceptions, marked the whole course of the enterprise. When mismanagement abounded; when disaster succeeded disaster; when more and more of the hard-earned pence of the working members were called for to save from total loss all that had been spent before, when the resident members were asked to sacrifice one little comfort or luxury after another, the Socialists rose again and again to the demands made upon them. And they recognised and condoned in others the same generous contempt for material limitations of which they were conscious in themselves. There was no blame for Owen and those who should have advised and controlled him when it appeared that all the available resources of the Society had been lavishly expended without any prospect of immediate return. And when for the second time Owen had betrayed their hopes, and the more level-headed men from the north took upon themselves to manage the business, and endeavoured by more prudent husbandry to restore the fortunes of the enterprise—even when they too failed, and the Socialists were forced at last to admit the defeat of their dreams, and many also the loss of all their possessions, they accepted the failure not without dignity. There were no doubt misunderstandings, sharp differences of opinion, even in some cases mutual reproaches. But there were no squalid outbursts of baffled egotism and greed, no wild accusations of fraud and corruption, dishonouring alike to accuser and accused. All were involved in a common misfortune, but even in defeat they still nursed an unsullied hope.

And to us, looking back upon the enterprise with unprejudiced eyes, it is clear to be seen that, disastrous as failure was, in success—such success as alone could have been attained in the conditions—lay the possibility of more ignoble disaster. That the little band of colonists, by a more scrupulous calculation of ways and means, a more judicious expenditure on their schools and buildings, a more prudent husbandry and household economy, should have grown fat and comfortable, and should then have found that there was not enough for all—should have been forced to choose between sharing again the leanness and discomfort of their fellows, or holding fast, at whatever sacrifice of honour and loyalty, to the good things which had fallen to their lot, and should have made the wrong choice,—only in such a case would there have been disaster complete and irremediable.

CHAPTER XXIII

1848

THE end of Harmony may be told in few words. Mr. John Buxton, the last Governor and one of the assignees appointed by the Congress of July, 1845, remained, as already said, with his wife and family in the Hall until June, 1846. Buxton appears to have been an entirely honourable man. But he was a poor man, an artisan, and notwithstanding the fact that the Central Board under his governorship had prepared admirable balance sheets and analyses of expenditure, it is probable that he was scarcely competent to deal with questions involving large sums of money. And, indeed, there was need of an expert to disentangle the complicated financial questions arising out of the ruin of the Queenwood enterprise. Moreover, the appointment of assignees, in supersession of the existing board of trustees, was a step of doubtful legality. The very existence of the Society itself was considered by some to be a breach of the law. And any way, whatever the legal position of the assignees, it was the trustees who were in fact responsible to the lessor for the rent, which was now more than twelve months in arrear. There had been meetings between Finch, Pare, Bracher and Buxton in May, 1846, but, no agreement could be

arrived at; and ultimately Finch, acting upon legal advice, early in June took forcible possession of the property and turned Buxton and his family, not, however, without due notice, on to the roadside. On the roadside Buxton insisted on remaining—in a tent: and the Congress summoned by him to meet at Harmony Hall at the end of June began its proceedings in the tent and ultimately adjourned to Rose Hill, the small manor house which had been purchased by Owen. At this meeting a series of resolutions was moved by Pare, one of the assignees, recognising the legal rights of the trustees in the matter, and calling upon Buxton to afford them every assistance in his power. The resolutions were ultimately passed without a dissentient voice.¹

Shortly afterwards Harmony Hall itself and the adjacent grounds were let for the purposes of a school to Mr. George Edmondson, a member of the Society of Friends. Mr. Edmondson was a well-known educationalist; he had also been employed by the Czar in carrying out some plans for the advancement of agriculture.²

The system of instruction pursued at Queenwood College—for that was the name of the new institution—was such as Owen himself might have approved. Besides classical and modern languages there were taught chemistry, natural philosophy, painting, music, and surveying. Attached to the school was a farm department, of eight hundred acres, at which the pupils

¹ *Reasoner*, Vol. I., pp. 38-40, 81-88, 96; Holyoake's *History of Co-operation*, Vol. I., pp. 307, 308.

² *Spirit of the Age*, Vol. I., p. 6 (July 1848).

were afforded opportunity for the scientific study of agriculture and farming operations. The school attained some celebrity. Amongst the resident masters were J. Haas, from Fellenberg's Institution at Hofwyl, and Professor Tyndall, who continued for some years to lecture in natural philosophy and mathematics.

An illustrated school paper was published under the editorship of the students—the *Queenwood Reporter*, afterwards taking the title of the *Queenwood Observer*.¹

For some years no serious attempt was made to wind up the affairs of the Society; from time to time the trustees were urged to give an account of their stewardship, but declined to do so. Ultimately, in 1861, William Pare, who had taken the leading part in composing the quarrels of 1846, entered an action against them in the Court of Chancery to compel the rendering of accounts. The case was tried before Lord Romilly, Master of the Rolls. The most noteworthy feature in the defence was that the trustees instructed, or at least permitted, their counsel to plead that the action would not lie because the Rational Society was founded for illegal purposes, and for the propagation of immoral doctrines. The judge considered and dis-

¹ The Rev. A. Woodin, Rector of Broughton—the nearest village to Queenwood—has kindly furnished me with particulars of the end of Queenwood College. Edmondson's School after some years proved financially a failure. He was succeeded by a Mr. W., who also conducted a school, but eventually had to abandon the enterprise. Towards the end of last century the buildings came into the occupation of a Mr. D., who ran "an electrical engineering and poultry farming establishment." Mr. W. remained on the premises and acted as secretary to the new proprietor. On June 10, 1901, a fire broke out and the buildings were burnt down, Mr. W. perishing in the flames. The remnants of the building were ultimately sold and carted away, so that now not one stone remains on another.

missed the plea, and judgment was given in favour of the plaintiff. In the event the property was sold and the proceeds divided amongst the shareholders. The hundreds of small subscribers to the original Community Fund received nothing.¹

We must now return to consider the fate of the parent Society. As may be readily conceived, the events of 1845 and 1846 reacted seriously upon the enthusiasm of the members; subscriptions fell off; and it seemed for a time as if the Society would cease altogether. In the *Reasoner* for June 17, 1846, we find John Cramp, Vice-President, urging all who still take an interest in the Society to pay their subscriptions in order that they may not lose their membership, and with it the right to vote.² On the 30th of the same month the Honorary Financial Secretary reports that there are only 187 members in the Society who have paid their subscription for the current year. Of these 187, 41 belong to London, 22 to Sheffield, 15 to Glasgow, and 10 to Rochdale.³ The Society did in fact continue to exist for some years longer. But the fate of Harmony Hall was a sufficient warning against premature experiments in Community-building. In March, 1848, when the new French Republic was organising a Socialist experiment on a colossal scale, the question of renewing the Socialist propaganda in this country was raised at a meeting held at the John Street Social Institution. Whereupon the Sheffield Branch, at a meeting in the Hall of Science, Sheffield, on March 26, "Resolved,

¹ *Reasoner*, Vol. XXVI., p. 306; Holyoke's *History*, Vol. I. pp. 309, 310.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. I. p. 40.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

that until Messrs. Owen, Pare, Finch, Jones and others have brought the affairs of Harmony to an open, honourable and satisfactory settlement, this Branch cannot co-operate in any plan whatever for the public agitation of social principles.”¹

This resolution was addressed to the Central Board of the Rational Society; and the implication that the propagandism of “Social”—*i.e.* Socialist—principles was not a necessary part of the Society’s work requires some commentary. In fact the objects of the Society of many names, originally founded by Owen in May, 1835, as the “Association of All Classes of All Nations,” could be regarded from several points of view; and one aspect or another was emphasised according to the circumstances of the time and the prepossessions of the individual member. The two primary aims were the reconstitution of the religious and ethical codes of the world on a new basis—the non-responsibility of the individual for his character and actions; and the reconstruction of the social system. The second aim, as one that seemed capable of more speedy realisation in practice, had absorbed the attention of the leaders for some years. But as we have seen, even in the height of the Community-building fever Holyoake, Southwell and others had devoted their energies mainly to the more general propaganda of a “rational” religion and system of morality. Probably the provincial branches generally, as being less under Owen’s personal influence, tended always to lay stress rather upon the ethical than on the social reconstruction. In this connection it is significant that whilst the London Branches named their places of

¹ *Reasoner*, Vol. IV., p. 349.

meeting "Social Institutions," the provincial towns generally preferred the title "Halls of Science."¹ The very name of the Society in recent years emphasised the religious (or anti-religious) rather than the social aspect of its activities. Up till the beginning of May, 1842, it had been known to the world as "The Universal Community Society of Rational Religionists." But at the Congress which met in that month a change was made in the name of the Society, and in the declaration of its objects. The crisis was brought about by the action of the Bishop of Chester. Since the prosecutions of 1840 the Society had, as we have seen, held themselves entitled to register their halls as places of public worship for Protestant Dissenters under the Act 52 George III. c. 155. But the Bishop of Chester in 1841 refused any longer to grant licences to the Socialist Halls; and refused also to submit the question of the legality of his action to arbitration. The Central Board debated the question of applying for a mandamus, but ultimately, considering "that our Society would be descending from that high moral position which it claims, by admitting itself to be a Protestant Association in any meaning that is generally assigned to the term," resolved to dispense with the Bishop's licence, and to stand under their own colours. The Congress accordingly resolved :

1. That the Society should henceforth be known simply as "The Rational Society."
2. "That the principle on which it is based is that the character of man is formed for him."
3. "That the object of the Society is to make man

¹ See the list given in the *New Moral World*, Vol. X., p. 312.

a rational being, and society united, wealthy, intelligent and happy.”

In the description of the means by which this new state was to be attained only the most general terminology is employed and no direct reference is made to the formation of Communities of united interest.¹

After the break-up in 1845 the Society was represented for a time in London by the *Moral World*, a newspaper started by G. A. Fleming, which ran for a few months; then by the *Herald of Progress*, edited by John Cramp, which ran from October, 1845, to May, 1846. On June 3, 1846, appeared the first number of the *Reasoner*, edited by G. J. Holyoake, which continued until June, 1861. The *Reasoner*, according to the opening editorial, “will be Communistic in Social Economy, Utilitarian in Morals, Republican in Politics, and Anti-theological in Religion.” But as time went on the first article of this creed gradually dropped out of sight. The John Street Hall so early as 1846 changed its name from the Social Institution to the “Literary and Scientific Institution.”² The Socialist Missionaries returned to their trades; entered the ranks of journalism; or, if they lectured at all, preferred to discourse on the new electrical theories, the revelations of phrenology and mesmerism, or the superiority of Secularism over Christianity as a guide through life “to mankind generally and the working classes in particular.”³

¹ *New Moral World*, Vol. X., p. 377. ² *Reasoner*, Vol. I., p. 142.

³ See the *Reasoner passim*. Vol. I., p. 11, gives an account of the occupations of the ex-missionaries. The sentence quoted in the text is taken from the title page of a Public Discussion between the Rev. Brewin Grant and Mr. G. J. Holyoake, London, 1853.

But if the Rational Society soon died out in London a flourishing offshoot of it has lasted to the present day. The National Community Friendly Society was, as we have seen, founded at the Manchester Congress of 1837 in connection with the Association of All Classes of All Nations. The two Societies were amalgamated in 1839. At the Congress of 1842 the Manchester delegate was able to report that his branch (Branch No. 1) reckoned no fewer than 386 members and candidates, and was in a very flourishing condition. In the list of the 187 members of the Rational Society given in the *Reasoner* in June, 1846, no representative from Manchester appears. It would seem therefore that the Manchester Branch had already resolved to have no more to do either with experimental Socialism or militant Rationalism. In fact they had restricted their operations to the narrower and safer sphere of a Friendly Society for providing funds for sickness and burial. The Society is now known as the "Rational Association Friendly Society," and has its headquarters at the Rational Buildings, Manchester. It claims to have been founded in 1837 by Robert Owen, and its almanac for 1906 bears a picture of Owen himself and of the ideal village. It has at the present time nearly nine hundred branches distributed over the whole of England; its members number 124,000, and its accumulated funds amount to £540,000. It is interesting to note that there was in 1904 one member on its books who joined in 1843, when Harmony Hall was still a going concern.

Again, to many of the Socialists, amongst whom Holyoake himself and Lloyd Jones were the chief, there was soon opened a more congenial field of activity than

the celebration of the barren gospel of Secularism. Even while the enterprise at Queenwood was hastening to its final disaster, the seed which Owen sowed had in another part of the kingdom fallen on fertile soil, and was destined to bear fruit abundantly. Towards the end of 1843 a committee of flannel-weavers at Rochdale—the seat of an active Branch of the Rational Society—appealed to the masters for a rise of wages; and prepared, in the event of refusal, for a strike fund by ordaining a levy of 2*d.* a week from each member in full employment. In the event the masters refused the application, and the committee met to determine whether they should strike or not. The members present were all agreed that something must be done. To organise a strike before they had accumulated funds seemed too hazardous. Some were for political agitation—the Charter and Reform. Others were for reviving the Co-operative schemes of the previous decade. Ultimately the Socialists—the leaders of whom appear to have been Charles Howarth, who figures occasionally in the Manchester Correspondence, and William Cooper, both enthusiastic disciples of Owen—carried the day. They determined to carry out the idea of a weekly subscription of 2*d.* each member, and to use the money so accumulated to form a Trading Fund.

The Society was registered in October, 1844, under the title of the “Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers.” The following extracts from their prospectus will show their aims:—

“The objects and plans of this Society are to form arrangements for the pecuniary benefit and the improve-

ment of the social and domestic condition of its members, by raising a sufficient amount of capital in shares of one pound each to bring into operation the following plans and arrangements :

“The establishment of a store for the sale of provisions, clothing, &c.

“The building, purchasing or erecting a number of houses in which those members desiring to assist each other in improving their domestic and social conditions may reside.

“To commence the manufacture of such articles as the Society may determine upon, for the employment of such members as may be without employment, or who may be suffering in consequence of repeated reductions in their wages.

“As a further benefit and security to the members of the Society, the Society shall purchase or rent an estate or estates of land which shall be cultivated by the members who may be out of employment, or whose labour may be badly remunerated.

“That for the promotion of sobriety, a Temperance Hotel be opened in one of the Society’s houses as soon as convenient.

“That as soon as practicable the Society shall proceed to arrange the powers of production, distribution, education and government ; or in other words to establish a self-supporting home-colony of united interests, or to assist other Societies in establishing such Colonies.”

The Society, it will be seen, was formed on the same lines, and set before itself the same aims as the numerous Co-operative Societies which sprang up from

1826 onwards. It followed, indeed, pretty closely the lines sketched out at the Congress of 1831, except that where Owen and his friends proposed to contribute pounds, the Rochdale weavers could only offer pence. But the pence were paid.

The Society opened its Store on December 21, 1844, amid the jeers of the small boys of the town. Their members then numbered twenty-eight and their whole capital amounted to £28. Thirteen years later, in 1857, their numbers were 1,850, their capital over £15,000, and their annual sales £80,000.¹

The success of the Rochdale Pioneers and the mighty movement which sprang from that insignificant beginning are matters of history. The co-operators of Great Britain now number two million two hundred thousand: their share capital exceeds £28,000,000, and all their transactions are on the same colossal scale. But in achieving this immediate success, they have lost sight of the larger aims which inspired the beginning of the movement. Co-operators of the present day are not conspicuously more eager than other persons to raise the standard of education for their children, and the lesson of Queenwood has been so thoroughly learnt that in the long list of Co-operative Productive Societies I cannot find one devoted to agriculture.²

It is matter of history that this mighty tree grew from the seed scattered broadcast by Robert Owen. Nor are the co-operators themselves slow to acknowledge

¹ I have taken this account from Holyoake's *History of the Rochdale Pioneers* (Tenth edition, 1900). See also Beatrice Potter's *Co-operative Movement in Great Britain*, p. 61.

² Co-operative Union; Report to Paisley Congress, with Statistics for 1904.

their indebtedness to the great Socialist. One and all look up to Owen as the founder of their movement, regardless of the fact that the master expressly repudiated them and their ideals in the day of small beginnings, and would, it is to be feared, equally repudiate them as disciples now in the height of their material prosperity.

It is now time to take up again the thread of Owen's personal career. As will have been gathered from the last chapter, he took no active part in the closing scenes at Harmony Hall. In the autumn of 1844 he had gone to the United States on a mission to preach his doctrines, and remained there, with the exception of a few weeks in the summer of 1845 which were spent in England, until the spring of 1846. He stayed some time with his family at New Harmony; visited the Ohio Phalanx, Brook Farm, and Hopedale—three of the most important Socialist Communities of the time; delivered many lectures throughout the country; interviewed Members of Congress and other eminent citizens, and summoned a "World's Convention" to meet him in New York in October, 1845. Adin Ballou, the founder of Hopedale, afterwards well known as a Spiritualist, who met him about this time, gives the following characterisation of him:

"Robert Owen is a remarkable character. In years nearly seventy-five; in knowledge and experience superabundant; in benevolence of heart transcendental; in honesty without disguise; in philanthropy unlimited; in religion a sceptic; in theology a pantheist; in metaphysics a necessarian circumstantialist; in morals a universal excusionist; in general conduct a philosophic non-resistant; in socialism a Communist; in hope a

terrestrial elysianist ; in practical business a methodist ; in deportment an unequivocal gentleman." ¹ The enthusiasm inspired by the subject may perhaps excuse the novelty of the terminology employed.

On his return to this country in 1846, Owen was entrusted by his son, Robert Dale Owen, then a member of the Federal House of Representatives, with a diplomatic mission of a delicate nature. The question of the delimitation of the boundary between Oregon and British North America was at that time in an acute stage. By an agreement entered into in 1818 the 49th parallel of latitude had been fixed as the boundary between British and American territory from the Lake of the Woods on the east to the Rocky Mountains on the west, but the delimitation of the region between the Rocky Mountains and the sea had been left undetermined. At the end of 1842 the British Government approached the Government of the United States with a view to a settlement, and thereafter for some years the matter was much canvassed in the press of both countries, as well as in political speeches and in diplomatic negotiations. In March, 1845, an unfortunate speech of the American President, Polk, brought the question to a point at which war seemed only too probable a solution. War indeed loomed so near that a Radical member of the House of Commons forbore on that account to move a reduction in the Army Estimates.² Matters continued in a critical state for more than a year. The Americans claimed that the line of the 49th parallel should be continued to the western seaboard ; the British Government

¹ Quoted by Noyes, *History of American Socialisms*, pp. 88, 89.

² Walpole, *History*, Vol. V., p. 341, note.

contended that the northernmost tributary of the Columbia River should form the boundary—a line which would have allowed them to approach some 150 miles to the southward. Neither side seemed willing to abate their pretensions. Robert Dale Owen had taken a keen interest in the question, and had given full proof of his patriotism to the country of his adoption. In January, 1844, he had delivered a speech in the House of Representatives on the subject, in which he had inveighed strongly against the greedy and overbearing nature of Great Britain's demands. Concession, he said, is an admirable policy within limits; charity and good neighbourship are excellent things to strive for—"But I may treat a neighbour kindly and courteously without being called upon to give him up half of my grazing farm, because he happens to have taken a fancy to it."

On April 1, 1846, just at the time when the Senate of the United States was preparing a resolution calling upon the President to terminate the existing convention and to take immediate steps to settle the boundary of the territory in dispute, Robert Dale wrote to his father, then in New York preparing to start for England, enclosing in his letter a copy of a recent manifesto by Webster, proclaiming America's unalterable determination to accept no line south of the 49th parallel. The writer urged his father to place the document before the British Ministry, and to assure them that this declaration, made in so deliberate a fashion by a man of Webster's position, must be taken as representing accurately the views of the American people.

Nothing doubting his own competence in the matter, the elder Owen accepted the mission thus entrusted to him, and on his return to England in May sought and obtained an interview with Lord Aberdeen, the Foreign Secretary. Not content with this step, he further wrote to Sir Robert Peel, the Prime Minister, as follows :

“TO SIR ROBERT PEEL, BART.,

“*Prime Minister of the British Empire.* (Confidential.)

“*May, 1846.*

“SIR,

“On you now rests, in an especial manner, the responsibility of directing the energies of the most formidable power that the world has yet known.

“That power is now at a crisis to make either an extraordinary advance to a much higher state of prosperity, or to enter on a course which will accumulate difficulties and create dangers that may destroy its present prosperity. I mean the combined power of the energies of Great Britain and the United States.

“In my recent interview with Lord Aberdeen he appeared to forget the entire change of feeling and policy which I effected in 1830 in favour of this country with the American Government,¹ and still less to be aware of what I have done in Washington and over the United States during the present Congress in favour of peace with this country.”

¹ The reference is to Owen's interview with Lord Aberdeen after his return from America in 1829. See above, p. 345.

Peel briefly and courteously acknowledged the letter and its enclosure ; also a further letter sent on the following day ; but he declined to give Owen an interview, and expressed the belief “ that Lord Aberdeen would concur with Sir Robert Peel in the opinion that no public advantage would arise from Mr. Owen’s authorised interference in the matter to which his letters refer.”¹

Eventually Lord Aberdeen succeeded in obtaining the consent of the American Government to a compromise. The 49th parallel was accepted as the boundary line to the coast, but the whole of Vancouver’s Island was retained under British sovereignty. And Owen could at least cherish the belief that he had contributed by his personal exertions to the happy issue of what might have proved a dangerous dispute.

After the settlement of the Oregon question Owen again returned to America for a time, but was back in this country in the summer of 1847, and at the General Election of that year received an invitation to stand for the Borough of Marylebone. He actually issued his election address, but did not go to the poll.² The following extract from the address gives a list of the measures which he professed himself prepared to advocate, should he be returned to Parliament :—

“ 1. A graduated property tax equal to the national expenditure.

“ 2. The abolition of all other taxes.

“ 3. No taxation without representation.

“ 4. Free Trade with all the world.

¹ The Correspondence is preserved in the Manchester Collection.

² See *Times*, July 29, 1847.

“ 5. National education for all who desire it.

“ 6. National beneficial employment for all who require it.

“ 7. Full and complete freedom of religion, under every name by which men may call themselves.

“ 8. A national circulating medium, under the supervision and control of Parliament, that could be increased or diminished as wealth for circulation increased or diminished ; and that should be, by its ample security, unchangeable in its value.

“ 9. National military training for all male children in schools, that the country may be protected against foreign invasion, without the present heavy permanent military expenditure.”

In August of this year Owen deputed Pare and Campbell to wait upon the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (the Earl of Clarendon) and furnish him with particulars of Owen's plan for the immediate relief of the distress in that country. Lord Clarendon received the deputation courteously, and conversed with them for about twenty minutes on the state of agriculture, fisheries and manufactures in Ireland.¹

Later in the same year Owen himself went to Ireland, where he stayed for a time with his old friend, Lord Cloncurry, and had an interview with the Lord Lieutenant on his own account.

The following year, 1848, was big with events which had a special interest for Owen and his disciples. Of the abortive Chartist demonstration on April 10

¹ Letter dated August 10, 1847, from Pare to Owen describing the interview. (Manchester Collection.)

we hear indeed but little in Owen's correspondence. Thomas Allsop¹ writes on April 8, "Very great alarm prevails here, and very grave apprehensions are entertained for the peace of the country generally by grave and reflecting men. The worst feature is the antagonism of classes shewn by the readiness of the middle classes to become special constables." This letter was addressed to Owen in Paris.

The Revolution had broken out on February 22 ; on the 24th Louis Philippe had abdicated and a Republican Government had been set up, with high ideals of industrial reorganisation. National workshops had been opened in Paris and employment with adequate wages was offered to all who applied for it. The scheme was as magnificently unpractical as any of Owen's own, and on a scale as large as his dreams. His friends were quick to seize the opportunity and urge Owen himself to proceed to Paris and instruct the revolutionaries in the true principles of social reconstruction. Thus William Pare writes on March 2, 1848 :

"By St. Paul, the work goes bravely on. It has become patent to all parties, the workpeople, the journalists, both French and English, and the New Republican Government, that this last is truly an 'Industrial Revolution,' and that it will in all probability render necessary an entire reorganisation of industry. . . .

¹ Thomas Allsop, a Lincolnshire landowner, friend of Coleridge and of Lamb. He had given Feargus O'Connor a qualification of £300 in land when he first became M.P. for Nottingham. A late convert, apparently, to Socialism. (G. J. Holyoake in the *Co-operative News*, June 11, 1904.)

“It is evident that the *monied* aristocracy is growing alarmed at this, and that the *Times* will leave no stone unturned to draw the new Government from its purpose. . . .

“ . . . this French Revolution will completely open up the general question with which we have been so long occupied under your guidance. The events of one little week have carved out enough work for you in Europe without as yet thinking of America.”

Finch follows in the same strain on the 7th of the same month :

“ DEAR FATHER,

“ Permit me to offer my warmest congratulations on the unspeakable happiness you must experience in the wonderful changes that have taken place amongst that noblest of the nations of the Earth, the French People. All your purposes are being fulfilled, all your highest aspirations for human liberty and social development and for human improvement and human happiness are about to be realised in that glorious country. You see the labour of your soul and the business of your life realised, and must be abundantly satisfied. The Commission you have so often sought and which you have so often beseeched the ignorant and benighted and prejudiced Government of England to form, for the purpose of enquiring into the causes of the miserable and destitute condition of her labouring population, the new Government of regenerated France has already formed, and it is now pursuing with untiring diligence

its sacred, its Divine Mission, which I have the most confident hopes will issue in the emancipation of the world. Should you not address them with counsel and assistance in these momentous affairs ?” . . .

Owen went to Paris at the end of March. In April he had interviews with the Minister of Foreign Affairs (? Lamartine), with Garnier Pagès, originally Mayor of Paris and afterwards one of the Commission du Pouvoir exécutif, with Louis Blanc and others. Early in June, accompanied by his friend Goupy, who no doubt went in the capacity of interpreter—for Owen apparently could neither read nor speak French—he attended the Comité du Travail, on the invitation of the President, A. Corbon, and expounded his system before them. Paris was deluged with Owenite literature. Owen prepared addresses to the men and women of France; to the National Assembly; “Au peuple français, aux militaires et aux civiles”—the last named being placarded on the walls of Paris; wrote letters to the newspapers; prepared translations of some of his earlier pamphlets; and wrote two entirely new ones—“Dialogue entre les membres de la Commission exécutive, les ambassadeurs d’Angleterre, etc.”; and “Dialogue entre la France, le Monde et Robert Owen.” These letters and pamphlets were printed by the thousand and distributed gratis to the members of the National Assembly and other prominent citizens; and it appears from the documents included in the Manchester Correspondence that Owen had some difficulty in meeting the printer’s bills.

The following extract from the second address to

the National Assembly, dated May 21, 1848, will give an idea of the general tenour of these documents. After reciting his own experiences and relating how he had discovered the errors of all religions and all governments in the past, Owen concludes: "Having also discovered, in the due order of time, and in accordance with the eternal laws of nature and of God, the foundations of a new life to all humanity, of a new character for man to be created from birth, in a new manner, to enable him to acquire the spirit of universal charity and love, and to be filled with valuable theoretic and practical knowledge, and thus to avoid past and present evils, and to ensure the future rapid progress and continued increase of the happiness of the human race, I come to your country in this important crisis in the history of all nations to explain in the spirit of kindness and love for you and the entire family of man, in what manner you may render useless all implements of destruction, give happiness to France, and, through its example, insure the permanent progressive happiness of the world."

M. Goupy, already mentioned, appears to have been Owen's chief guide and attendant during his stay in Paris. But an Irishman, Hugh Doherty, who had been in the thick of the movement from the beginning, took charge of him for a time.¹ The following letter from him gives a vivid picture of the hopes and aspirations of the revolutionists:—

¹ Doherty was already known to Owen. He had attended the Congress of May, 1840, and had there presented an address from a number of Co-operators resident in Paris, expressing their sympathy and appreciation of the work being done in England. (*New Moral World*, Vol. VII., p. 1314.)

“ HUGH DOHERTY TO MRS. WHEELER.

“ PARIS, RUE DES BEAUX-ARTS 5.

“ *May 7, 1848.*

“ DEAR MRS. WHEELER,

“ I should have answered your very kind letter earlier, but I have been waiting for Mr. Owen's return to England. He is very well, and very busy here, getting out a translation of his lectures in the Egyptian Hall. He will probably be with you soon and give you an account of all that is going on.

“ I have been very busily engaged in the revolution movement up to the present time, but as things are beginning to assume a more steady course, I am returning to my quiet avocations.

“ I do not know if I told you that I passed the greater part of the 24th of February in the Palace of the Thuilleries as soon as Louis Philippe had left, in writing out proclamations of the Republic, with which the people went to turn out the Chamber of Deputies, who were busily engaged in Concocting a Regency.

“ The Republic is universally accepted now, and the only difficulty is the social question. The privileged classes have swallowed the pill of political change, but they cannot swallow that of social reorganisation. They are, however, becoming more and more familiar with the idea of such a change sooner or later, and by and by their fears and apprehensions will be less violent.

“ The clubs and the papers are now engaged daily in discussing social questions, and the rights of woman are constantly put forth in all the clubs, though not as yet in the public press. It is a glorious sight to see

the clubs discussing and the thousand motley groups of animated talkers in the public streets and promenades; and though confused ideas are more abundantly put forth than common sense and simple truths, still there is a hearty wish to learn what should be done to forward the best interests of humanity.

“I am sorry to learn that things go on so badly in Ireland. When will that unhappy country ever revive? England, I fear, is moving on too slowly to arrive in time at any practical solution of her difficulties.

“It would do you good to be over here now; the moral atmosphere would give you life. Could you not come over?

“I send you the little knot of tricolor I wore myself in the first struggle. It would have been lost, long ago, if you had not asked for such a thing in your last letter.

“It smatters of the hurry of the time in its rude simplicity.¹

“Ever yours faithfully,

“HUGH DOHERTY.”

Then came the Four Days of June. Early in July the National Workshops were closed, and Owen's interest in the Revolution appears to have waned after that event. Goupy writes repeatedly to ask Owen to fulfil his promise of writing letters on the system for insertion in the French papers. Goupy himself continued the propaganda, however, without Owen's aid, and in the following year suffered imprisonment for the cause.²

¹ The tricolor, three separate bits of cheap ribbon—white, red and blue—hastily stitched together, is preserved with the letter in the Manchester Correspondence.

² Letter from William Pare, June 23, 1849.

Owen's last contribution to the affairs of France was an address to Louis Napoleon on his election as President in December of this year.

One other letter of this date may be quoted, from Lord Brougham, giving the characteristic view of the propertied classes.

"July 5, 1848.

"DEAR ·R. O.,

"Your letter came safe. I had an opportunity to send the letter (and yours to the Q.) to Prince A., and I had a very kind and gracious answer. He undertook to deliver it as requested.

"On Saturday week I explained to a Juvenile Delinquency Meeting in the City your being author of Infant Schools, and gave their whole History including J. Buchanan being lent to us by you. It is now a clearly understood point in Education History. Let me hear from you what the Louis Blanc men are about. Do you want an introduction to Ld. Normanby?

"Impress on all who desire success to the Republic that all depends as to the favour found here in England on their giving the King and Princes their property or a large portion of it, and not plundering them. The cry is *universal* against them on this."

In explanation of the remarks at the beginning of Brougham's letter, it should be explained that during the later part of his life Owen was continually besieging royalties, ministers and important personages generally with addresses and petitions on his system. In that very year he had already sent four or five letters to the Queen,

through the Prince Consort. The Prince at first accepted and duly acknowledged them through his secretary. But at last he rebelled, and sent a sharp rebuke to Owen—“ You must be aware that the only constitutional method of addressing the Sovereign upon matters relating to the Government of this Country is through the advisers of the Crown, who are responsible for the administration of the Government.”¹

¹ Letter from C. B. Phipps, dated Windsor Castle, November 28, 1848.

CHAPTER XXIV

SPIRITUALISM

FOR some three years after the collapse of the Harmony experiment Owen published no important work, and had no periodical to represent his views. In 1849, however, there appeared a slim octavo volume, *The Revolution in the Mind and Practice of the Human Race: or the Coming change from Irrationality to Rationality*, recapitulating the chief points of his system already set forth in the *Book of the New Moral World*.¹

In November, 1850, appeared the first number of *Robert Owen's Journal, explanatory of the means to well-place, well-employ and well-educate the Population of the World*; and from this time onwards he was represented by a succession of periodicals until his death in 1858. The *Journal* ran until October, 1852. In February of the following year appeared the *Rational Quarterly Review*, of which four numbers were published. The first five Parts of *The New Existence of Man upon Earth* appeared in 1854; Parts VI., VII. and VIII. in 1855. Lastly, the *Millennial Gazette* ran from March, 1856, to June, 1858.

The Rational Society by this time appears to have

¹ See above, Chapter xxi.

dissolved into its constituent elements. The A1 Branch, whose local habitation was at 23, John Street, had, as already recorded, changed its name. It was ultimately known as the General Literary and Scientific Institution.¹ It was still the headquarters in London of Owen's disciples and well-wishers. The several World's Congresses and Conventions, after the inaugural meeting, which generally took place in some public hall hired for the purpose, continued their session in the big Lecture Hall of the John Street establishment. It was here that meetings were held to celebrate Owen's birthday, and congratulatory addresses presented.² There were regular lectures and Sunday services, and a permanent choir. An old member of the Institution tells me that he belonged to the choir, that he had heard Owen-lecture in the hall, and that he recollects how all those present would stand up when the venerable founder entered.³ There was still a Society at Manchester,⁴ and little groups of disciples at Birmingham, Stockport, and elsewhere. There was a

¹ *Kelly's Directory* for 1858.

² See e.g. *Robert Owen's Journal*, Vol. II., p. 43.

³ The "General Literary and Scientific Institution" appears to have come to an end after Owen's death, for its place is vacant in the *Directory* for 1859. In 1860 the premises were taken by an auctioneer; afterwards they became a repository for iron and tin ware. Somewhere between 1865 and 1870 the name of the street was changed to Whitfield Street, and the houses were re-numbered. The premises, which are now numbered 40, Whitfield Street and known as the Albert Rooms, have reverted in part to their original use, for they serve as a Dancing Saloon and Academy. The courteous proprietor allowed me to see the hall—now a spacious ball-room—which still retains part of the old galleries.

⁴ *Journal*, Vol. II., p. 40. The Manchester Society at this time is styled the "Social Society." It does not appear whether this is identical with the Rational Friendly Society referred to in the previous chapter.

flourishing Redemption Society at Leeds, which seemed to be following in Owen's footsteps. In 1850—the fifth year of its existence—it was able to report that nine of its members were now settled on the Society's own land, and that they had begun to manufacture shoes, and hoped to follow on with tailoring.¹

But there was no organised body of disciples, as in the great days of 1832-45. Owen's later periodicals no longer, as in the days of the *Crisis* and the *New Moral World*, recorded the varying fortunes of great Socialist experiments. In default of material of this kind, their columns were filled with repetitions of Owen's message in various forms, leading articles, Addresses to Government, letters to prominent statesmen; and with reprints of Owen's previous publications, such as the *Dublin Report* and the documents which appear in the Appendix to his *Autobiography*. In short his mind was now feeding on itself: he could but repeat his message in endless monotony. He continued, however, down to the end of his life to hold public meetings, or Congresses, on the date of his birthday. Thus on May 14, 1854, he delivered an "Address to the Human Race: with his last legacy to the Governors and Governed of all Nations." On the corresponding date in the following year there was a public meeting to celebrate the commencement of the millennium. Two months later, in July, 1855, we read of "the Millennium in practice"—so that it did at last march—on paper.² On May 14, 1856, there was a "Congress of the

¹ *Journal*, Vol. I., p. 136. The farm is stated to have been in Carmarthenshire.

² *The Millennium in Practice, being the Report of the Adjourned Public Meeting of the World's Convention, July 30, 1855.* London, 1855.



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THE SOCIAL INSTITUTION IN JOHN STREET
(Now the Albert Rooms, 40, Whitfield Street).

Reformers of the World." Even in his last year, 1858, a meeting assembled on the same date "To consider the best means immediately to commence practical measures to NEW FORM MAN AND NEW FORM SOCIETY."¹ Owen was too feeble himself on this occasion to read to the meeting the address which he had prepared. That task was undertaken by Mr. Cooper ; but Owen, as we are told, frequently interposed during the reading with further explanations and illustrations.

But though after four-score years he could add nothing to the exposition of his social system, Owen was not forced to content himself with merely repeating the message with which he was charged to his generation. In his last years he preached a surprising new gospel, not in opposition to his former teaching, but as supplementing and confirming it. The second number of the *Rational Quarterly Review* is mainly devoted to Owen's correspondence during the previous quarter with Prince Albert, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Ministers, on the occasion of sending them copies of the first number of the periodical. But the number ends with "a Manifesto to all Governments and all Peoples" :

"A great moral revolution is about to be effected for the human race, and by an apparent miracle.

"Strange and incredible as it will at first appear, communications, most important and gratifying, have been made to great numbers in America, and to many in this country, through manifestations, by invisible but audible powers, purporting to be from departed spirits ;

¹ *Millennial Gazette*, June 21, 1858.

and to me especially from President Jefferson,—Benjamin Franklin,—His Royal Highness the late Duke of Kent,—Grace Fletcher, my first and most enlightened disciple,¹—and many members of my own family, Welch and Scotch. . . . By investigating the history of these manifestations in America, and subsequently, as will be narrated, through the proceedings of an American medium, by whose peculiar organisation manifestations are obtained, I have been compelled, contrary to my previous strong convictions, to believe in a future conscious state of life, existing in a *refined material*, or what is called a spiritual state, and that, from the natural progress of creation, these departed spirits have attained the power to communicate, by various means, their feelings and knowledge to us living upon the earth.

“From the communications which have been made to me, through the aid of this American medium, from the father of our present Sovereign, Jefferson, Franklin, and Grace Fletcher, I am informed that these new manifestations, or revelations, from the spiritual, or, more truly, the refined material world, are made for the purpose of changing the present false, disunited, and miserable state of human existence, for a true, united, and happy state, to arise from a new universal education, or formation of character, from birth, to be based on truth, and conducted in accordance with the established laws of human nature. . . . Were it not for these new and most extraordinary manifes-

¹ Grace Fletcher was engaged to “the late Professor Brown of Edinburgh,” and died at the age of nineteen. Owen had no doubt known her when he was living at New Lanark. (*Future of the Human Race* [1853], p. 31.)

tations, there would arise a conflict between the evil spirits of democracy and aristocracy, which would deluge the world with blood, and would create universal violence and slaughter among all nations. But these manifestations appear to be made at this period, to prepare the world for universal peace, and to infuse into all the spirit of charity, forbearance and love.

“These new and extraordinary manifestations have not changed my confidence in the truth of the principles which I have so long advocated, nor my assurance of the benefits to be derived from their universal application to practice. On the contrary, the certainty of the immense permanent advantages to be insured by the adoption of this system by the human race, has been confirmed to me by the spirits of Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, the Duke of Kent, and Grace Fletcher.”

Owen then proceeded to describe how his attention had been first called to the subject. He had heard of the outburst of Spiritualism in America and had called on Mrs. Hayden, an American medium then on a visit to this country, to purchase a book on the spiritual manifestations written by his friend Adin Ballou.

“While conversing with Mrs. Hayden, and while we were both standing before the fire and talking of our mutual friends, suddenly raps were heard on a table at some distance from us, no one being near to it. I was surprised; and as the raps continued and appeared to indicate a strong desire to attract attention, I asked what was the meaning of the sounds. Mrs. Hayden said they were made by spirits anxious to communicate with some one, and she would enquire

who they were. They replied to her, by the alphabet, that they were friends of mine who were desirous to communicate with me. Mrs. Hayden then gave me the alphabet and pencil, and I found, according to their own statements, that the spirits were those of my Mother and Father. I tested their truth by various questions, and their answers, all correct, surprised me exceedingly.”¹

Thereafter Owen had many *séances* with Mrs. Hayden, and satisfied himself, as he tells us, that the raps were not produced by her agency, and that he could obtain by this method correct information on subjects entirely unknown to Mrs. Hayden. As an illustration of the kind of information given, the following example may be quoted :

“I had then for some days various communications with the spirits of my deceased brothers and sisters, all of whom gave me true answers respecting the time and place of their death, &c. And all the spirits, without one exception, who have said they were in communication with me have stated, emphatically, that they were ‘very very happy.’

“Calling one morning at Mrs. Hayden’s when I had just received a letter from my daughter in America, I asked when raps were made, what spirits were present? The reply by the alphabet was, my daughters—‘Anne Caroline,’ and ‘Mary.’ I put the letter, unopened in its envelope, upon the table, and I asked if they knew from whom it came? The reply was ‘Yes.’ I requested they would spell the name of the writer, by the letters of the alphabet. They said they would and immediately they gave—‘Jane Dale Owen’—the writer’s

¹ *Rational Quarterly Review*, p. 126.

maiden name. I then asked if she had any other name? The answer was 'Yes.' What is it? 'Fontleroy.' The name being Fauntleroy. (The spirits often spell phonetically.)

"A day or two after this I called, on a very cold night, and I had protected myself by putting about my neck a new comforter, which had been lately sent me from America. It occurred to me to ask who sent it to me. I threw it upon the table, and asked the spirits said to be present, whose present was it? The answer was 'Martha Trist' (the true name of the young lady who sent it, and who is the great-granddaughter of President Jefferson). I then asked what was the name of the young lady's father? The answer was 'Nicholas Trist.' (Correct.)"¹

To the uninitiated, it must be admitted, these results seemed very surprising, and many persons were convinced who could not plead four-score years and two in excuse for their credulity. The explanation of the raps revealing the secrets of the mind is, in fact, a simple one. It did not satisfy Owen and other Spiritualists, partly because of its very simplicity.

For ten or twelve years before the date at which we are now arrived (1853) the wonder-loving public of England and America had been satiated with the marvels of mesmerism, electro-biology, phrenology and other so-called sciences. In America a series of remarkable trance-revelations had been given to the world in 1847 by an inspired cobbler's apprentice. In the following year two naughty little girls in a rural township in New

¹ *Rational Quarterly Review*, p. 142.

York State had amused themselves and mystified their friends by means of a trick familiar to naughty little girls for many generations—to wit by rapping or cracking their toe-joints—using the foot of their wooden bedstead or the wooden walls of their parents' house as a sounding-board. The neighbours came and marvelled ; and the affable intelligence announced itself by raps as the spirit of a murdered pedlar. The excitement grew ; other “mediums” learnt the trick—and in a few years the new gospel of Spiritualism had spread all over the United States. In the winter of 1852 it came to Paris ; and early in 1853 it crossed the Channel. In the spring and summer of that year all England was consulting spirits by means of tilting tables. On to a stage thus prepared for them came two or three American rapping mediums, who advertised in the following style : “Spiritual Manifestations and Communications from departed friends, which so much gratify serious, enlightened minds, exemplified daily at. . . .”¹

The best known of these was Mrs. Hayden, wife of a gentleman who had at one time edited *The Star-Spangled Banner*. The procedure at Mrs. Hayden's *séances* was as follows : the consultant would be given a pencil, and a card with the alphabet printed on it, and would be requested to ask a question of the “spirits,” and to run the pencil slowly down the alphabet, until a rap was heard. The letter thus indicated would be noted down, and the process repeated until the whole word or sentence had been given. The “spirits” would answer almost as readily if the question were asked mentally, as if it were asked aloud.

¹ From the front page of the *Times*, April 16, 1853.

As to the method employed, it is not necessary to suppose that Mrs. Hayden cracked her toe-joints. Probably she used more convenient and up-to-date devices, but as her person was not searched and no efforts seem to have been made to ascertain how the raps were produced, it is impossible now to say what really happened. In fact the attention of most enquirers was diverted from the raps themselves to the seeming miracle of their intelligence—their all but omniscience! The explanation, as said, was extremely simple. The questioner's hands, holding pencil and card, were always in full view of the medium, who by long experience had learnt to detect the slight hesitation or other indications unconsciously afforded by the consultant when the right letter was reached, and to time her rap accordingly. At about the same date as Owen's manifesto G. H. Lewes in the *Leader* had explained to his readers how the trick was done, and related that by carefully emphasised hesitation at the appropriate letters he had held a conversation with one of the Eumenides, receiving much information, not to be found in any classical dictionary, about his interlocutor's domestic relations; and had induced the table to confess, in reply to his mental questions, that Mrs. Hayden was an impostor, and that the ghost of Hamlet's father had seventeen noses.¹

But for the most part demonstrations of this kind were addressed to deaf ears. It is so much easier and so much more exhilarating to believe at large in the efficacy of spiritual forces, than to fatigue the attention in the effort to understand and measure the operation of such humble agencies as our own fingers and our

¹ *Leader*, March 12, 1853.

neighbour's five senses. The champions of common sense found but a small audience. Many of those who at this early date "investigated" the subject seem to have abandoned themselves wholly to the guidance of the spirits. The history of one of the circles at which Owen attended—for other mediums were soon found to replace Mrs. Hayden—will serve to illustrate the procedure. Jacob Dixon was a homœopathic doctor practising in London, who appears at one time to have held some post at the Charlotte Street Institution.¹ He had for many years studied the phenomena of ecstasy and clairvoyance, his attention having been first led to the subject through seeing a patient mesmerised by Elliotson. He had, as he tells us later, become convinced by his investigations of the possibility of communication with spirits. At the height of the excitement caused by Mrs. Hayden's visit to this country, Dixon happened to call one day on a friend named E——, a professional phrenologist and healer. E—— was at the moment holding a *séance*, the medium (and only other sitter) being a little errand boy, nine years old, employed by him. With the permission of the spirits, Dixon was invited to join the party. He received through raps communications from various friends and relatives, and was informed that his guardian spirits were Job, Enoch, Noah and Bacon. Conviction came on the moment; and was deepened when at later sittings the raps undertook to prescribe for Dixon's patients, and also for himself. Moreover, an epidemic of cholera in the autumn of 1853 was pre-

¹ Letter dated June 10, 1834, from Jacob Dixon resigning his post, and congratulating Owen on having so good a man as Austin to succeed him.

dicted, to a day, two months before its occurrence. The manifestations consisted exclusively of raps; and Dixon remarked that there was some excuse for the suspicions—suspicions which he did not himself share—of the good faith of the medium entertained by some who were admitted to the circle, since the lower part of the boy's body was "much exercised" whilst the sounds were being made. Little opportunity was offered, however, to such sceptics, since the spirits for the first year seem rarely to have permitted any one but E—— and Dixon to share their ministrations. Later, however, Owen was permitted to attend and question the spirits.¹

In the course of the few months' sittings recorded by Dixon the raps indicated from time to time that a knife, rabbits, a goat, money (for his mother), and a gun were to be presented to the boy, Daniel Offord. All these commands were punctually fulfilled by E——, except that Robert Owen forestalled him in purchasing the gun. It is but fair to add that the spirits also issued commands—when the punishment for a serious offence committed by Dan was left to their decision—that the boy should be whipped; and that later they prescribed schooling for him. It should be added that E—— and all his household, including the medium himself and an elder sister, were originally vegetarians, but the raps ultimately prescribed a meat diet for all. It will be noted that E—— gave implicit obedience to the commands issued through the raps. In the history of English Spiritualism Dan and his master had many successors.

Of the communications from the spirits of Milton,

¹ *New Existence of Man upon Earth*, Part. VI., p. xx.

Shakespeare, Benjamin Franklin, the Duke of Wellington, etc., which were vouchsafed at many *séances* at this period there is no need to speak here. Much rubbish of this kind is recorded in the appendices to Parts VI. and VII. of the *New Existence of Man upon Earth*, published in 1855. But Owen himself was concerned, not with the occupations of the Seven Spheres, or other mysteries of spiritual cosmology, but with matter of immediate practical importance—to wit, the introduction of the Social System. Thus, at what appears to have been his first sitting with Daniel Offord, he briefly records the presence of the Duke of Kent, Jefferson, Franklin, Shelley, Dr. Chalmers, Elias and Daniel the prophets; and proceeds forthwith to business. The proof sheets of Part V. of the *New Existence* lay upon the table, and he asked the spirits whether they approved it; whether he should distribute it widely; whether in his lectures and meetings he should entirely denounce the Old System, and boldly advocate the immediate introduction of the New Dispensation.¹

At another *séance* he asks: “Are the Queen, Prince Albert, the King of the Belgians, the Emperor of the French, and the Emperor of Austria, the proper persons to form a Conservative party to introduce the New Dispensation?”²

Throughout Owen held his interest in Spiritualism as a revelation of a future life subordinate to its practical importance as a means of hastening the advancement of the millennium, the cause to which all his life had been devoted. Thus at the World’s Convention of May, 1855, “to inaugurate the commencement of the

¹ *New Existence*, Part VI., p. xx.

² *Ibid.*, p. xvii.



*By permission of Mrs. E. Holyoake Marsh.
From the print formerly in the possession of the late George Jacob Holyoake.*

ROBERT OWEN.

From an engraving published by William Farquhar in 1856.

Millennium," he was so engrossed with the exposition of his system that he forgot to introduce the subject of Spiritualism. A band of American Spirits, through the mouth of J. Murray Spear, had sent an address to be read at the Convention. The address was entrusted to a famous medium, P. B. Randolph, who presented it to Owen on the day before the meeting. Owing to the stress of business the papers remained unread until after the Convention, and Owen, though at first disposed to regret the incident, recognised later that the introduction of such a subject in such a manner might have prejudiced the success of the cause which he held most at heart.

At the similar Convention, however, held in the following year, "The First Meeting of the Congress of the Reformers of the World," plans for Homes of Harmony emanating from the same spiritual source appear to have been submitted to the audience. These Homes of Harmony illustrated a new order of architecture, based upon curved lines, such as govern the conformation of trees, planets, and the human body itself. The engravings given in the *Millennial Gazette* bear some resemblance to the first rude attempts at a honeycomb made by some kinds of undeveloped bees.

Most of Owen's interrogations of the spirit world were addressed to the "Duke of Kent," who had announced his presence at one of the early sittings with Mrs. Hayden, and thereafter made regular appointments to meet Owen and give him advice on the methods to be pursued in spreading the knowledge of the New Dispensation, the persons to whom memorials should be addressed, the Members of Parliament or Royal personages who should be solicited to give their aid.

Towards the end of 1853 one of Owen's numerous correspondents, Mr. F. Hockley of Croydon, wrote to tell him of some communications which had been received from a spirit styling himself the Crowned Angel of the Seventh Sphere, in which the spirit of the Duke of Kent was denounced as an impostor masquerading under an honoured name. The Crowned Angel professed a deep interest in Owen's career, and eighteen months later addressed to him through the hand of Mr. Hockley's medium a long communication, beginning with the ordinary terrestrial formula, "My dear Mr. Owen." Owen courteously replied, subscribing his letter "To the Crowned Angel from the Seventh Sphere."¹

For the benefit of readers unfamiliar with the early history of Spiritualism, it should be explained that Owen's attitude of unquestioning acceptance in the presence of these spurious marvels was by no means exceptional. There were many men and women still in the ripeness of their faculties, and far better equipped both by education and natural endowment to deal with manifestations of this kind—half imposture and half self-deception—who showed a like indiscriminate credulity.² It should be remembered, moreover, that not only did the trustfulness of Owen's nature render him a ready victim to impostors, but that the wide publicity given to his aims and to the facts of his life made it an easy task for the designing medium to play up to his prejudices, and to produce information about his personal or family history.

¹ *New Existence*, Part VII., p. 53.

² I have endeavoured to trace the causes of this strange delusion in my book on *Modern Spiritualism* (2 vols). Methuen, 1902.

CHAPTER XXV

LAST DAYS

FOR many years Owen had no fixed home of his own. His income during these later years had been drawn from the fund set aside for his maintenance in 1844 by his sons, as already described,¹ which amounted to something over £300 a year. During the latter years of the forties until some time in 1853 he appears to have resided mainly at Cox's Hotel in Jermyn Street, boarding with the proprietor's family, and paying inclusive terms of 30s. a week. Mr. Cox, as shown by some accounts in the Manchester Correspondence, took charge of Owen's remittances from America, and furnished him with money in small sums as he required it. Several letters testify to the warm feelings of affection which united him to the Cox family. In the last of them, written only a few months before Owen's death, William Cox, the son, after urgently renewing advice given previously that Owen should take a little whiskey with his meals, for his health's sake, goes on to express the writer's hope that he may see more of his old friend in the future: "I feel a drawing towards you I never felt so strongly before—it is like some spirit influence

¹ Above, p. 395.

that has linked me more closely than ever to you—my Friend, my Counsellor, my Guide.”¹

But as the burden of age increased it appears to have been felt by his friends that more restful surroundings were necessary, and a home was ultimately found for him at Park Farm, Sevenoaks, where he resided with few intermissions from 1853 to his death. His later letters are dated characteristically from “Sevenoaks Park.” From about the same date James Rigby, one of the old Social Missionaries, who was at this time Secretary to the Co-operative Association, 58, Pall Mall, took charge of Owen’s business affairs, saw to the printing of his addresses and periodicals, delivered his letters and addresses to Ministers, Prince Albert, etc., and acted as his personal attendant on all his journeys.² The letters which follow will serve to illustrate the kind of service rendered by this most faithful and devoted follower.

The letter on the opposite page relates apparently to the proceedings at the World’s Convention held in the previous month.

¹ Manchester Correspondence. Letter from William Cox, June 3, 1858.

² The Manchester Collection includes about four hundred and fifty letters written by Owen to Rigby, nearly all from 1853 onwards.

7 or 9 June 1855

My dear Sir

I have been waiting to hear from you what has been done or doing this week in London no same I heard from the Rev Mr Pore on from Lord Bute - but I have

heard from the Reporter who claims his then enquiries - I will settle with him when I come to town which may be some day next week. As my night is fast going I must work while it is day with the some more decisive measures must be yet accomplished before my business will be ended. I am etc

Time for more this morning
 can be spent

Robert Owen

I shall wash reports of the
 lectures here up for however
 much a set of reading 200
 with the address upon them -
 of the usual number will be
 required - What of Cambridge?
 to be returned -

TRANSCRIPT.

"SEVENOAKS, June 9, 1855.

"MY DEAR RIGBY,

"I have been waiting to hear from you what has been done or doing this week in London; nor have I heard from the Dr. or Mr. Pare or from Lord Monteaule, but I have a letter from the reporter, who claims his three guineas. I will settle with him when I come to town, which may be some day next week, As my sight is fast going I must work while it is day

with me, and some more decisive measures must be yet accomplished before my mission will be ended. I have not time for more this morning.

“Ever yours affectionately,

“ROBERT OWEN.

“I shall want reports of the meetings made up for America, under or not exceeding 203., with the address upon them, and the usual number will be required. What of Randolph [the American medium referred to on p. 613]? Is he returned?”

“November 11, 1855.

“MY DEAR RIGBY,

“I am out of funds because my remittances from America, several weeks overdue, have not come to hand, and Misses McGowan are much in want of payment for Part 7.

“I daily expect the money from America: but in the meantime it is very inconvenient not to pay the ladies who, I doubt not, want the money to pay wages. Would B. lend me fifty pounds until the remittances arrive? I would not like to ask him if I thought it would be inconvenient to him or that he would refuse: but as his funds are intended to promote my views according to his statement—and I have expended this year more than £250 for the Public—it seems but natural that he should aid me as I have stated.

“Yours in haste,

“Affectionately,

“ROBERT OWEN.”

The next letter is one of the last written by Owen, just before the final journey from which he never returned.

York, 7 Oct 1825

My dear Kings

You have done exactly
 what I wished respecting
 the Liverpool Bazaar
 when opportunity occurs
 call according to the
 address on Miss Agnes, as
 she is myself, the letter
 I am as poor as herself
 & obliged to borrow to pay
 my way. But if you
 think a pound can do
 her real good for my

my very long ago made
promise give it to her
if you have so much on
hand. but it is scarcely
just, except as an
extreme case to lend
other peoples money
I see her I have not lived
at her house for 30 years.

I have just now written
to McCoy who he has
expected here all day
but the storm has been
too severe for boating.

I have requested him
to deliver a sermon about who
is supposed to be here
in time, to say -

"About I also own come
to your father at Cox about
Lovers without and some
delay & say when you
can be here"

(with the day, how I visit
when sent from the office,
Mr Cox may have left home
before my letter would
reach the hotel at the

time but - To learn
 this of Mr. once to the
 Hotel, & ascertain how
 many stand & apply
 your usual discretion.
 Yr affec^d
 Rowson

TRANSCRIPT.

"SEVENOAKS, October 7, 1858.

"MY DEAR RIGBY,

"You have done exactly what I wanted respecting the Liverpool Banquet.

"When opportunity occurs, call according to the inclosed on Miss Reynolds [?], as old as myself—tell her I am as poor as herself, and obliged to borrow to pay my way. But if you think a pound can do her real good, for my very long ago made promise give it to her, if you have so much on hand—but it is scarcely just, except in an extreme case, to lend other people's money. Tell her I have not lived at New Lanark for thirty years.

“I have just now written to Mr. Cox, who has been expected here all day, but the storm has been too severe for travelling. I have requested him to telegram Robert, who is supposed to be now in Rome, to say—‘Robert Dale Owen. Come to your father at Cox Hotel, London, without an hour’s delay, and say when you can be there’ (with the day, hour and minute when sent from the office).

“Mr. Cox may have left home before my letter would reach the hotel, and the time lost. To learn this go at once to the hotel and ascertain how matters stand, and apply your usual discretion.

“Yours affectionately,

“R. OWEN.”

Next to the Great Exhibition of 1851,¹ the event which probably most attracted Owen’s interest in these closing years was the foundation of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, the first meeting of which was held at Birmingham in October, 1857. Owen was unable to attend himself, but he sent to its five sections as many papers, two of which, on Social Science and on “The Human Race governed without Punishment,” were actually read at the meetings by Sir Benjamin Brodie and Matthew Davenport Hill respectively.²

But in the following year, having now completed

¹ On his birthday in 1851 he issued a “Proclamation to all who attend the World’s Fair.” Steps were also taken to form a committee for the distribution of a series of “Tracts for the World’s Fair” written by Owen. (See *Robert Owen’s Journal*, Vol. I. *passim*.)

² *Millennial Gazette* for November 15, 1857.

the first volume of his *Autobiography*, which appeared in the autumn of 1857, Owen determined to attend the meeting of the Association at Liverpool, and deliver in person his last message to mankind. On September 13 he writes to Rigby that he has nearly finished an important paper to be read at the meeting, and asks Rigby to make arrangements with Dr. Travis for having it "copied in a superior manner to be easily read."

"This," he adds, "I believe will be my last effort for the public, and I intend it to be the crowning one. I am full of pain, more acute, I think. . . ."

On October 8, 1858, he writes again to Rigby :

"SEVENOAKS, *October 8, 1858.*

"MY DEAR RIGBY,

"Robert Dale came here too late last night for my kindest friend¹ to allow him to disturb me, and now, half past seven o'clock a.m., it is too early for him to come, and I do not expect to see him before this must go to the morning post.

"*Rigby must be at the Banquet as associate, therefore immediately purchase an associate's ticket for the year and write for a Banquet ticket for Mr. James Rigby.*

"The funds I will supply afterwards.

"But on receipt of this letter go to Cox's Hotel, and say to Mr. Cox that I sent you to enquire about the notice to the newspapers of Robert Dale's arrival in London.

"And on your own account put into all the papers

¹ Mrs. Twort, apparently the tenant of the farm, who tended Owen, looked after his health, and sometimes acted as his amanuensis.

you can without payment, 'We have it on good authority that Mr. Robert Dale Owen, the son of Robert Owen, and late United States Minister for upwards of five years to Naples, arrived yesterday in London, and almost immediately left again for Sevenoaks to see his father, who had for some days been much indisposed and confined to his bed,' or something like it, however short. I expect to be in London on Monday and to see Robert in about one hour.

“ROBERT OWEN.”

He did actually travel down to Liverpool a few days later to attend the meeting.

“At the end of his journey to Liverpool he had to take to his bed. On the day of the meeting—the last public meeting he was destined to appear at—he ordered Mr. Rigby to dress him. His feebleness was such that the operation took two hours. He was then placed in a sedan chair, and carried to the Hall. Four policemen bore him to the platform. It is now matter of public history, how kindly Lord Brougham, as soon as he saw his old friend, took him by the arm, led him forward, and obtained a hearing for him. Then Mr. Owen, in his grand manner, proclaimed his ancient message of science, competence, and good will to the world. When he came to the conclusion of his first period, Lord Brougham, out of regard to his failing strength, terminated it. He clapped his hands, applauded his words, then said, ‘Capital, very good, can’t be better, Mr. Owen! There, that will do.’ Then in an undertone, ‘Here, Rigby, convey the old

gentleman to his bed.' He was carried back. As soon as he reached his bed he became unconscious."¹

He remained in bed for a fortnight at the Liverpool Hotel, and then resolved to make the journey to Newtown. He had to leave the train at Shrewsbury, and drive the rest of the journey, over thirty miles.

"When he came to the border line which separates England and Wales, he knew it again. It was more than seventy years since he passed over it. He raised himself up in his carriage, and gave a cheer. He was in his own native land once more. It was the last cheer the old man ever gave."²

On the way he passed the house of an old friend, and drove up to ask if Dr. Johns was at home. Dr. Johns had been dead twenty years. But his daughter still lived there, and welcomed her father's old friend, brought him into the house, and gave him some flummery, the dish of his choice. Then he drove to the "Bear Hotel" at Newtown, entering himself under the name of Oliver, and went to the house of his birth two doors off to buy some notepaper. The shopkeeper, Mr. David Thomas, seems to have guessed his customer's identity, and Owen shook hands with him silently. Then he drove straight back to Shrewsbury. From Shrewsbury he wrote to Mr. Thomas, asking him to summon a public meeting at Newtown and promising to return in order to address it. He did in fact return a few days later, and took up his abode at the "Bear Hotel." Rigby returned to London

¹ *Life and Last Days of Robert Owen*, by G. J. Holyoake, 1859, p. 7.

² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

to fetch Robert Dale, and Owen remained alone in the care of Dr. Slyman. Though now reduced to great feebleness he refused, Holyoake tells us, to take any stimulants. On the afternoon of November 16 Owen had an interview with the Rector of Newtown, at which he made arrangements for holding a series of meetings in the town, and sketched out a plan for reorganising the education of the parish.¹

Robert Dale Owen came down from London on the same day and watched by the bedside. That night at half-past one (*i.e.* 1.30 a.m. on the 17th), the dying man called out to ask the time, and was answered. "He did not distinctly hear it, and supposed the reply to be half-past two. His eyes were dim then, but fearing his attendants might suffer from loss of rest, he avowed himself to be in no want of anything, and desired them to retire. Of course they were always at hand, and when an hour after he again asked the time, he was answered half-past two. At the end of a similar period he made a renewed enquiry as to the time, and on being told it was half-past three, his sense of hearing being low, he evidently understood the reply to be half-past two, and he said in his usual smiling way, 'Why, it has been half-past two these three hours.' He thought some friendly imposition was being practised upon him, and he showed his perfect possession of his mind by quietly rebuking it."²

A few hours later he passed away, as described in the following letter from his son, who stood at the bedside holding his hand till the last.

¹ *Threading my Way*, p. 68.

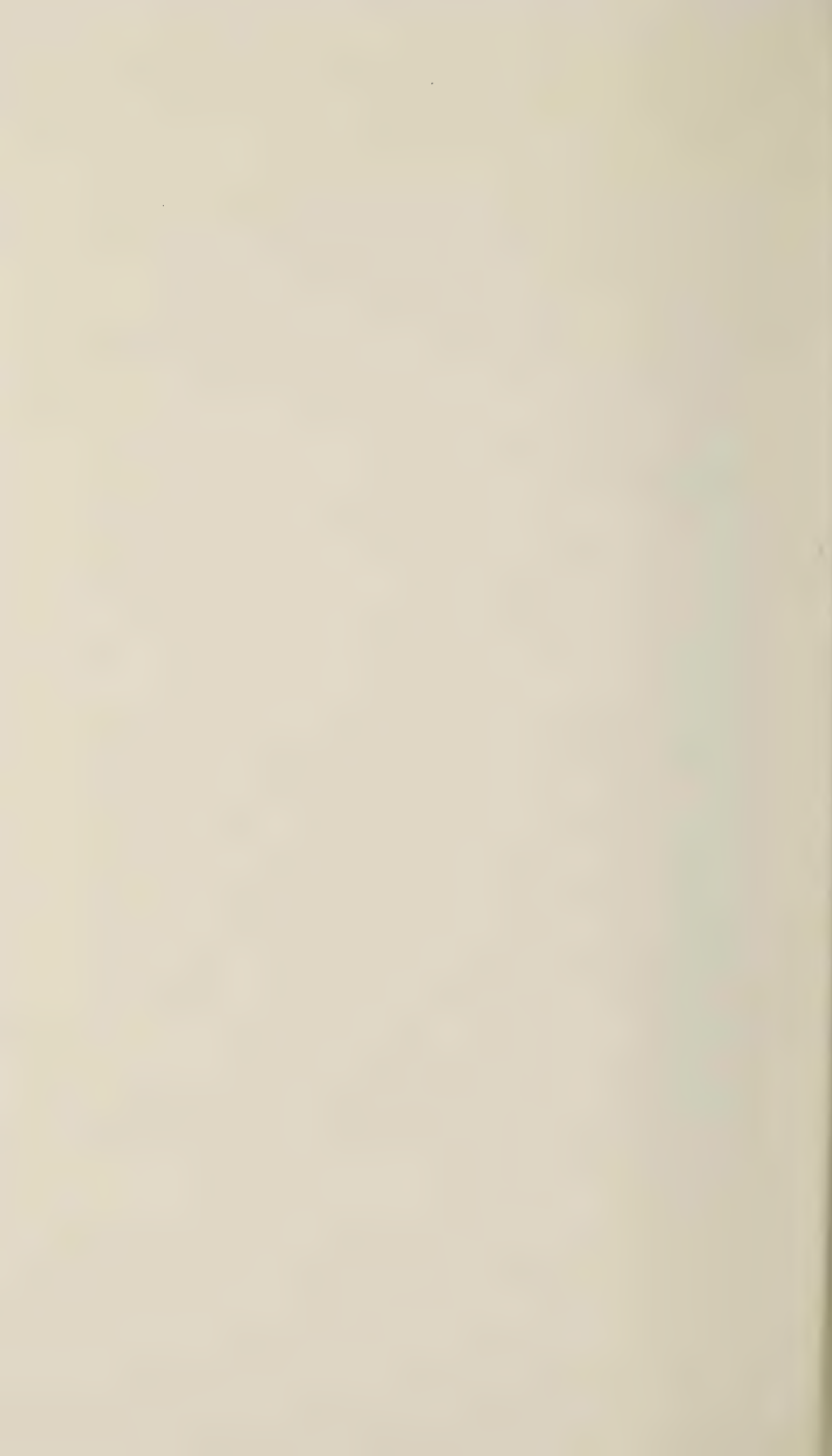
² *Life and Last Days* p. 10.



Photo by permission of Mr. John Owen, Newtown, Montgomeryshire.

ROBERT OWEN'S GRAVE IN 1860.

Newtown, Montgomeryshire.



"NEWTOWN, MONTGOMERYSHIRE,

"November 17th, 1858.

"It is all over. My dear father passed away this morning, at a quarter before seven, and passed away as gently and quietly as if he had been falling asleep. There was not the least struggle, not a contraction of a limb, or a muscle, not an expression of pain on his face. His breathing gradually became slower and slower, until at last it ceased so imperceptibly, that, even as I held his hand, I could scarcely tell the moment when he no longer breathed. His last words, distinctly pronounced about twenty minutes before his death, were 'Relief has come.' About half-an-hour before, he said, 'Very easy and comfortable.'"

The body was removed from the hotel into the house of his birth, and from thence was carried on the 21st of November to the new church, and then to the grave in the old churchyard, next to the ruined church, of which parts of the outer walls now alone remained. There, in accordance with his own request, he was placed in the grave, next to his parents.

Besides Rigby and Robert Dale Owen, there were present at the funeral several of his chief disciples from London—Holyoake, Truelove, W. Pare, Thomas Allsop, W. Cox, W. H. Ashurst and others. Some of these would have preferred a burial without the ceremonies of the Church, but Owen's wish to be buried near his parents, in consecrated ground, made this impracticable.

In 1902, as the result of a subscription amongst the co-operators of the United Kingdom, a handsome

iron railing was placed round the tomb, bearing a sentence from Owen's own teachings,—“It is the one great and universal interest of the human race to be cordially united, and to aid each other to the full extent of their capacities.”

Attached to the front of the railings is a bronze bas-relief showing Robert Owen, with the veiled figure of Justice behind him, holding out his hand to a long procession of workers, a weaver stooping beneath the weight of the warp which he bears on his shoulders, a potter carrying a large jar, field labourers with scythes, a carpenter with his bag of tools, a woman bent down to the earth.

CHAPTER XXVI

CONCLUSION

ROBERT OWEN was not a handsome man. There can; I think, be little doubt that the portrait which forms the frontispiece to the first volume fairly represents Owen's features in early middle life, as they must have appeared to a not specially sympathetic observer.¹ With advancing years it is probable that the rugged lines of the face were somewhat softened; the superior comeliness of the portraits by Brooke and Farquhar is perhaps not wholly due to the painters' desire to supply the deficiencies of nature. But of his frank ugliness, at any rate in middle life, there can be no doubt. Owen himself tells us that he was on more than one occasion mistaken for Brougham; and the statement, to those who know the political caricatures of the first half of the last century, will scarcely need comment. An old friend of mine, the niece of that Charles Southwell who was one of Owen's less judicious followers in the period from 1830 to 1845, frequently during her early childhood saw Owen at her father's house, and can still recall how his appearance repelled her. Owen's granddaughter, Mrs. Templeton,

¹ Compare this portrait with the portrait reproduced from *The Crisis* (facing p. 376 of the present volume), which was issued under Owen's own authority, and was therefore presumably considered by him as a faithful likeness.

has told me that on one occasion, when she was waiting at a railway station near New Harmony, an old man approached and asked her whether she was not an Owen. On her explaining her relationship to Robert Owen, the other replied, "I knew your grandfather well—he was the ugliest man I ever saw." Again, on another occasion Miss Owen was travelling in the neighbourhood of New Harmony in a coach, which stuck in the mud. A farmer chanced to come by with his waggon and team. Glancing into the coach he noticed my informant, and said, "That is an Owen in that corner, I can tell by the nose: I am going to get her out"—and he hitched his team on. So that Mrs. Templeton, as she says, was pulled out of the mud by her nose. The nose is a prominent feature in the only other member of the Owen family whom I have met.

And it must be added that in general society Owen could be a bore of the first magnitude. He was conscious of a message to deliver to mankind, and in the business of its delivery he recognised no limitation of place or season, and no distinction of persons. Here is a hasty sketch of him from the pen of Macaulay. The occasion is a fancy dress ball at the house of a wealthy Jew:

"There were . . . and Owen the philanthropist. Owen laid hold on Sheil, and gave him a lecture on co-operation which lasted half an hour. At last Sheil made his escape. Then Owen seized on Mrs. Sheil, a good Catholic and a very agreeable woman, and began to prove to her that there could be no such thing as moral responsibility. I had fled at the first sound of his discourse."¹ But Macaulay, it may be surmised, was

¹ *Life of Macaulay*, by Trevelyan, Vol. I., p. 220. Letter of August 6, 1831.

scarcely a sympathetic recorder. Despite his indifference to social conventions, Owen throughout his life won the respect of all, and the sympathy and sincere affection or most of those who came in contact with him. We have already seen the impression produced on Mrs. Trollope by Owen's share in that strenuous entertainment at Cincinnati in 1829—an impression in no way attributable to the seductiveness of his dialectic or the charm of his eloquence. Again, Miss Martineau, writing at about the same time as Macaulay, gives another and a kindlier view of his social qualifications.

“Mr. Owen was presently at my ear, laying down the law in the way which he calls ‘proof,’ and really interesting me by his candour and cheerfulness, his benevolence and charming manners, which would make him the most popular man in England, if he could but distinguish between assertion and argument, and abstain from wearying his friends with his monotonous doctrines.

“Having this strong hope of Prince Metternich for a convert, he might well have hopes of me . . . for many months my pleasant visitor had that hope of me ; and when he was obliged to give it up, it was with a kindly sigh. He was sure that I desired to perceive the truth, but I had got unfortunately bewildered.”

Miss Martineau adds that she sees in the times some signs of an impending industrial revolution : “If that should happen, it ought to be remembered that Robert Owen was the sole apostle of the principle in England at the beginning of our century. Now that the Economy of Association is a fact acknowledged by some of our

most important recent institutions . . . every one would willingly assign his due share of honour to Robert Owen, but for his unfortunate persistence in his other characteristic doctrine, that man is the creature of circumstance (meaning literally surroundings).

“His certainty that we might make life a Heaven, and his hallucination that we are going to do so immediately under his guidance, have caused his wisdom to be overlooked in his absurdity. . . . I own I became weary of him, while ashamed, every time I witnessed his fine temper and manners, of having felt so.”

Miss Martineau adds that she asked Owen to read the four Gospels, which he undertook to do, if she for her part would read Hamlet as a lesson in Necessitarianism. Each no doubt carried out the compact. “But Robert Owen,” Miss Martineau adds, “is not the man to think differently of a book for having read it, and that from no want of candour, but simply from more than the usual human inability to see more than what he has made up his mind to see.¹”

But Miss Martineau was only one of many who, without any special sympathy with Owen's plans for the regeneration of the world, were drawn into terms of affectionate intimacy with him by the magnetism of his personal character. Chief among these, as shown by the Manchester Correspondence, were Lord Brougham, Francis Place, and, among his Irish friends, Lord Cloncurry and Lord and Lady Torrington, who kept up their correspondence with him almost until his death. Owen was godfather to one of Lady Torrington's children. Again, though the columns of the *Times* had been

¹ Miss Martineau, *Autobiography*, Vol. I., pp. 231, 233, anno 1833.

practically closed to him since the meetings of 1817, he remained on terms of personal friendship with the editor, T. Barnes. The correspondence contains occasional invitations to dinner, and a cordial letter from Mrs. Barnes regretting that Owen cannot come until late the following Sunday, as it is her birthday and she wants to see her "real friends." This was in 1830.

Leigh Hunt and James Martineau were also included amongst Owen's outside friends. Here is a characteristic letter from the former :

"18, ELM-TREE ROAD, ST. JOHN'S WOOD,
"REGENT'S PARK, *September 26, 1831.*

"MY DEAR SIR,

"Allow me to introduce to you, or rather to re-introduce, Mrs. Hunt, (for she once had the honour of receiving you at dinner). She comes to ask you two favours, one for herself and one for me—being, you must know (to speak Hibernically), my man of business, a character which *you* will not quarrel with in a woman, provided she knows how to unite it with kindness and liberality. Believe me, ever, my dear sir, with the greatest respect, your affectionate servant,

"LEIGH HUNT."

But in those who accepted Owen not merely as a friend, but as a prophet, the feelings which he inspired went far beyond ordinary affection. Thus Finch, writing from Queenwood on "23, 5 Mo., Year I New Moral World" (February 23, 1840), begins his letter "Revered and Honoured Father." T. Allsop subscribes himself "Yours with reverence and affection"; others address him as "My dear Social Father," "Very much

revered Father," "Venerable and Illustrious Father." After Owen's visit to Paris in 1848, a friend writes to him, "The young man . . . is very desirous you would write him a few lines, that he might have some of your handwriting, which he will keep as good Catholics do the relics of their saints."¹

Here, again, is an address from the Socialists at Cincinnati on the occasion of Owen's visit to the United States in 1844.

"REVERED AND MUCH HONOURED FATHER,

"We, the undersigned, your disciples and children, do beg leave most respectfully to write a few lines to you, expressive of our filial affection and happiness at your once more visiting this country.

"Some of us regret much at your short stay in this city in not being enabled to see you at your late visit. Most happy should we have been once more to take by the hand a man to whom we owe so much; for we most unqualifiedly declare that whatever little amount of real knowledge we do possess is entirely owing to thy divine teachings—a debt which we shall never be able to repay.

"Neither is this the language of vain adulation, for the disciples of Robert Owen can never be guilty of such, but it is in the spirit of truth and eternal justice so oft inculcated by yourself, that we thus bear testimony to these our sentiments. Verily we may well say that 'a greater than John the Baptist is now in our midst.'"

And like feelings endure amongst his disciples to this

¹ Letter from S. Andreae, September 29, 1848.

day. Mrs. Templeton tells me that when, as Rosamond Dale Owen, she first lectured in London in the eighties, she met with many proofs of the depth of the feelings inspired by her grandfather. Old men would come up to her with tears in their eyes, and tears running down their cheeks, to talk about Robert Owen, and to testify how their whole lives had been changed by seeing him and hearing him speak. One of her auditors kept ejaculating throughout her lecture, "God bless you! God bless you!" and followed her afterwards to her cab with "God bless you!"—because she reminded him of the teacher to whom he owed so much.¹

The secret of the extraordinary influence exercised by Owen not only on those who came into direct contact with him, but over the whole generation of his contemporaries, is to be found in his personal character. Robert Owen was a man without guile. He was also without malice. It was the union in him, in a supreme degree, of these two qualities, simplicity and goodwill, which explains his influence. Here is Brougham's testimony to Owen's character, given in the course of the debate in the House of Commons on December 16, 1819. "He had the highest respect and esteem for Mr. Owen, whom he really believed one of the most humane, simple-minded, amiable men on earth. He was indeed a rare character; for although a projector, Mr. Owen was one of the most calm and candid men he had ever conversed with. You might discuss his

¹ I offered to buy the last six volumes of the *New Moral World* from one who had been in his youth a member of the Choir at the John Street Institution. But he insisted on giving them to me as a free gift. I think it would have seemed to him a sacrilege to barter his Master's writings for money.

theories in any terms you pleased—you might dispose of his arguments just as you thought proper, and he listened with the utmost mildness. His nature perfectly free from any gall, he had none of the feverish irritable feelings which too generally belong to projectors.” Brougham does not assert, however, that Owen was convinced by his opponents’ criticisms.

An old friend remarked to his son that if Robert Owen had had in his nursery seven thousand children instead of seven, there would have been love enough to go round.¹ And the stream flowed on inexhaustible until the end. Owen’s life was one long protest against the poverty and unhappiness—needless poverty and unhappiness as he conceived it—which he saw around him. His hand and heart were always open; he seems rarely to have turned a deaf ear to any appeal. Throughout his life he was the recipient of innumerable begging-letters. That is no doubt the fate of all men who come prominently before the public. What is noteworthy is that Owen did not put these appeals into the waste-paper basket, but carefully preserved and apparently answered them, in some cases at any rate sending the help asked for.²

¹ *Threading my Way*, p. 66.

² Here are some samples: G. Hands has invented a machine for preventing shipwreck, and would like to patent it; Brown wants to establish a claim to the peerage; R. O. Davies—a nephew—would like £300 to enable him to take a small farm; a shoemaker, who has been giving lectures on astronomy in public-houses, would like to buy a van, and travel round the country lecturing; J. Westbrook writes, in 1831, that he has invented a machine for receiving, recording and registering votes at elections, all in secret and without human aid; another man would like £50 or £60 to furnish a small cottage, and would be obliged if Owen could also find a publisher for two manuscript volumes of poems; Francis Maccrone has discovered the art of flying, and wants £100 for two months, etc., etc.



By permission of the sculptor, Mr. Albert Toft.

A BRONZE PLAQUE, SYMBOLICAL OF THE LIFE OF ROBERT OWEN.

From the grave at Newtown, Montgomeryshire.

There are letters also asking for advice and for help not of a pecuniary kind. A young law-student writes from Lincoln's Inn Library that he has been convinced by hearing Owen's lectures and reading his writings, and will straightway renounce his profession and his social privileges and cease to read for the Bar. He offers himself to do the humblest service which should assist in carrying out the glorious scheme which Owen has outlined. There are many similar appeals from young men in poorer circumstances, all obviously inspired by genuine enthusiasm for the Cause, and affection for its prophet. One of the quaintest personal appeals is from Joseph Smith of Salford—afterwards a prominent social missionary. He writes to Owen as "My very dear Father," and begs him to use his great influence to bring about a reconciliation between the unhappy suppliant and the young woman of his choice—else insanity or suicide await him. Owen must have replied promptly to this letter, for a few days later Joseph Smith writes to explain that all is well; they have met and made it up. He asks Owen not to mention the incident if he should happen to meet the young lady, and signs himself "Your dutiful and grateful and now happy son."

In fact Owen carried out visibly in his life the religion which he preached: "pure and genuine religion, which never did and never will consist in unmeaning phrases, forms and ceremonies, but in the daily undeviating practice, in thought, word and action, of charity, benevolence and kindness to every human being with whom we come into communication, or have any transactions near or remote. Now this and this alone is

true religion; and true, because it will lead to the greatest happiness that man can enjoy.”¹

This uniform goodwill to all showed itself in all his public utterances and in the very structure of his thought. There is no place found in him for scorn or indignation. He cannot bring himself to speak or think evil of any man. He carried out in his daily life his own teaching that man is not the proper subject of praise or blame.² Throughout his numerous works there is hardly a sentence of denunciation—of personal denunciation never. He loves the sinner and can scarcely bring himself to hate the sin.³

But this picture needs some shadows to give it the semblance of life. Robert Owen's character did not consist of benevolence unalloyed. But the defects were closely bound up with the qualities. His mind, so far as we can judge from the records, was one of singular innocence. Further, from the day when he left his father's house at ten years of age, his life had been one unbroken career of success. There had been no room for struggle within or without. He had no natural propensity to vice or excess and no external temptation had presented itself. By the accident of

¹ Second Lecture at Washington. *New Harmony Gazette*, Vol. II., p. 249.

² And he succeeded in inducing some of his disciples to practise the same virtue. Witness this extract from a letter written by Rigby in May of the fateful year 1848:

“Had you not taught me that Man does not make himself what he is I should say that our Government was deserving of condemnation, having the means in ample abundance to remove Poverty and ignorance from our land, and yet allowing day after day the real producers of all wealth to sink deeper and deeper into distress.”

³ The *Lectures on Marriage* form an exception to his other writings in this respect. But even here the invective is purely impersonal.

the time and for no better reason than that he was honest, sober, industrious and intelligent, he had risen step by step to fame and fortune. He had never known failure—for his dreams never admitted defeat—and hence he had never learnt humility. And this defect runs throughout his character. He was the least teachable of men. From the time when he first emerged into public life Owen learnt nothing and forgot nothing. We have seen that Miss Martineau declared that Owen was not the man to think differently of a book for having read it. So many instances of his extraordinary self-complacency and of his autocratic action have already been given in the course of this work, that it is scarcely necessary to dwell upon the subject. The respect inspired by his character—a respect increased by the fact that he stood to his followers generally in the position of a rich man dealing with poor men, a well-bred man with men ignorant and uncultured—served for the most part to reconcile his subjects to this despotism, which, however perverse on occasion, was always without alloy of personal interest. But there are letters amongst the Manchester Correspondence which indicate that Owen's unteachableness and arrogance must have constantly tended to alienate and even to embitter against him men of independent character who came under his influence.¹

And if Owen's want of humility and all that

¹ Thus G. Mudie, the founder of the London Co-operative and Economical Society, writes in August, 1848—"I had at one time almost idolised you—but I was not a blind worshipper" (he then complains that Owen had neglected and ignored him because) "I had been guilty of treason against your autocracy by questioning your views on spade husbandry."

followed from this defect tended constantly to diminish his personal influence, it reacted still more disastrously, as we shall see later, on his philosophy, or, as it would more accurately be described, his system of ethics.

I have referred to Owen's commercial success as due to the accident of the time. It is true that he enjoyed amongst his contemporaries the reputation of being a good man of business. He had shown indefatigable industry, a ready intelligence, a love of order both in the physical and in the moral world. Above all, he possessed the power of making his subordinates work, not by coercion, but by the love and trust which he inspired in them. But these qualities were no doubt sufficient, in an age when capital had an extraordinary monopoly value, and when enterprising manufacturers were making with ease 20 per cent. and more on their capital, to explain his commercial success at New Lanark. In fact the margin of profit was so wide that we need scarcely look for any other explanation of Owen's success as a manufacturer. Certainly in later life he gave no indication of possessing the qualities commonly connoted at the present day by the phrase "a good man of business." It is obvious from his evidence before the Committee of 1816 that, in shortening the hours of labour at his mills, he had paid no serious attention to the effect of the measure upon the output. Again, his argument based on Falla's experiments in spade husbandry reveals an almost childish incapacity to appreciate the factors in the problem. And throughout his later career, though he clearly possessed some degree of organising power, and could in a quite uncommon degree inspire men to

work under his direction, he shows no grasp of the principles of finance. His Equitable Labour Exchange, his very scheme of a Communist Village, betray complete ignorance, or indifference, to the financial aspects of the case. In his dealings with Bromley, the landlord of the Gray's Inn Road Institution, in the conduct of his other enterprises, including the various periodicals which were run under his direction, in his own private affairs, we find a complete disregard of commercial principles, a fine recklessness about money and money's worth. He acted indeed as though himself fully persuaded of the doctrine which he was constantly enforcing on others—that money was merely the clumsy expedient of an imperfect social system, which would be dispensed with as soon as the new order was introduced, when each man, having enough and to spare of all good things, would find no need to traffic with his neighbour.

Such was his carelessness in money matters, indeed, that on more than one occasion he was accused—and not, it would seem, without some superficial justification—of actual dishonesty in his dealings. The most serious of these accusations was made in regard to his dealings with the estates of his wife's sisters, for whom he was trustee under David Dale's will. To those who realise Owen's character it must appear superfluous to defend him from the charge of appropriating any part of the money for his personal gain; but it seems not at all improbable that he may have persuaded the Misses Dale to allow some of their money to be used for the advancement of the millennium in one form or another. And he inspired in his

children an indifference to money fully equal to his own, as may be inferred from the readiness which was shown by his sons, themselves not wealthy, to place their fortunes at his disposal.

Clearly Owen was not, by the modern standard, a good man of business. His constant preoccupation with the larger ends of life, his childlike trust in the honour and goodwill of all with whom he had dealings, his very experience as a manufacturer dealing with undertakings in which the margin of profit was in those days indefinitely elastic, made it impossible for him to engage in the nice calculation of more or less, the exact adjustment of means to ends, the vigilant weighing, measuring and reckoning of small things, which are essential to the conduct of business in the modern sense.

But if Owen was not a typical captain of industry, neither was he, in his later life, at any rate, to be classed as a social reformer. His work at New Lanark no doubt furnished a conspicuous illustration of reforms prudently initiated and patiently conducted to a successful issue. And even though he was building on another man's foundation, and it is doubtful how far originality can be claimed for any of the measures introduced, it was his unfailing goodwill and his inexhaustible faith in human nature which furnished the driving force.

But apart from the results achieved at New Lanark, there is no definite improvement in the social organisation to which we can point as having been devised and directly carried into effect by Owen. He gave, no doubt, the first impulse to factory legislation; but he soon grew impatient, as he himself has told us, of the

long-drawn-out struggle for Parliamentary action, and left the conduct of the fight to others. His other schemes—the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, the Equitable Labour Exchanges, the Villages of Co-operation and Equality—did not even begin to be practical. To discuss them seriously from the standpoint of mundane economics would be as futile as the attempt to appraise the value of soapbubbles as building material. In fact Owen was so dazzled by the splendour of his aims that he was never able to contemplate steadily the means necessary for their achievement. Like Browning's Paracelsus, he might have said :

I saw no use in the past.

A sullen page in human chronicles
Fit to erase. I saw no cause why man
Should not stand self sufficient even now.

I would have had one day, one moment's space,
Change man's condition.

Owen, then, was in fact neither reformer nor captain of industry, though in his lifetime he passed for both. His claim on our remembrance is of a quite different kind. He was a prophet. He saw far off the vision of a heaven on earth, and he never ceased, in season and out of season, to proclaim the happiness which he saw waiting for mankind. He was of those who "entonnent le cantique de l'avenir, et, présageant la ruine des cités maudites, chantent les splendeurs de la Jérusalem nouvelle."¹

¹ Reybaud, *Études sur les Réformateurs*, third edition, Paris, 1842 (p. 249). The Reformers dealt with are S. Simon, Fourier and Owen. It is perhaps scarcely necessary to say that Owen owed little to S. Simon

No one who has followed the course of his life can deny the reality of that vision, the unconquerable faith which it inspired. The disaster on disaster which overwhelmed one after another of his schemes for social salvation were to Owen but the momentary falling back of the waves as the tide flows up the beach ; his dreams, because they were dreams, never knew defeat. To Owen, as to all prophets, his vision seemed the one reality ; not merely was it true, but it was Truth itself. The imperturbable demeanour under criticism, which Brougham described in a passage already quoted, came not from an open mind, but from the most absolute self-confidence. Owen knew that he was right, and that those who differed from him differed only because they could not or would not understand. And if the New Jerusalem which he saw found its embodiment in a rather ridiculous quadrangle, it must be remembered that his vision was limited—as Owen himself would have reminded us in any other case than his own—by his nature, his personal experience, his environment, the whole circumstances of the time. He was a prophet of the tradition of Rousseau ; his gospel, the essential goodness of human nature. All wrong, all crime and suffering proceeded from the governments and other circumstances created by the perversity of man in the past. Let those governments be abolished, those circumstances re-created, give the natural instincts full play,

and nothing to Fourier. The latter's *Traité de l'Association domestique* did not come out until 1822 ; and he did not succeed until ten years later in establishing a periodical to represent his views. On the other hand, the Fourierite movement, especially in America, owed a good deal to Owen ; and Cabet, the founder of Icaria, was a friend, and, it may be said, a disciple of Owen's.

and man would rise to his full stature and perfection. Happily, there was none to hinder. Reason showed us the way : man had but to will, and it was done.

Such was the gospel, a gospel widely spread in the England of Owen's time by his master, Godwin, and by his friend and fellow-pupil Shelley.¹

“Cet appel à la raison et ce retour aux lois de nature, cette croyance à la possibilité d'une transformation immédiate et de toutes pièces de la nature humaine et de la société, par l'application quasi-automatique d'un système, sont bien les traits qui caractérisent la pensée du temps. La même idée d'une simple réfection de la machine sociale, réfection suffisante pour réaliser le paradis sur la terre, se retrouve chez tous les entrepreneurs de reconstruction sociale, chez tous les philosophes sociaux de cette époque. L'origine de tous romans sociaux, imaginés par des hommes qui se piquaient d'athéisme et de matérialisme, est dans une conception chrétienne qui s'est laïcisée . . . la culture de la vertu se fait mieux aux champs qu'à la ville. Dans l'imagination des philosophes sociaux, la représentation physique et morale de cet état de nature d'origine chrétienne se modèle sur le jardin du paradis terrestre, et l'innocence des premiers jours de la création.”²

Owen, as is the wont of disciples, set forth the ideas of his masters more nakedly and crudely than they could have ventured to do. And it is easier, therefore, to see the fallacies involved in the system. It is not

¹ I can find no mention in Owen's earlier writings of his acquaintance with Shelley, but when the spirit of the poet addressed him through the mouth of a medium in his later years Owen greeted him as “my old friend Shelley.”

² *Robert Owen*, by Édouard Dolléans, pp. 25, 37. Paris, 1905.

necessary to ask how far Owen was justified in teaching that circumstances create character—to enter into the age-long discussion of Freewill and Fate. Owen at any rate recognised certain facts in human nature which were generally ignored in his day by the Churches and by persons in authority. And though he assigned too exclusive importance to them, his insistence on their recognition was at the time unquestionably serviceable. But even as an exposition of Determinism his system was, of course, defective. It took account only of post-natal circumstances. He practically ignored what Christianity calls “original sin” and modern science knows as “inherited tendencies.” This one-sided view was of course part of the tradition which he inherited from eighteenth-century France. But it was confirmed in Owen by his personal experience of a life without struggle or failure. This blindness to essential factors in the problem throws all Owen’s system out of perspective. We are conscious, in reading his later utterances, of a sense of unreality, which at first bewilders, and finally exasperates beyond endurance. Of course this dealing with abstractions was in a measure common to the time. The industrious communist was not perhaps a more visionary figure than the economic man. There were, no doubt, economic men ; they gave evidence before the Factory Committee of 1816. And there were industrious communists—at Amana and Economy and, before Owen arrived on the scene, on the banks of the Wabash. But neither figure can, happily, be taken as typical. And in Owen’s case it is clear that he simply projected his own likeness on the world.

Thus Owen’s system left out more than one-half

of life. We have seen that among the Social Hymns none were found to celebrate the sterner virtues—justice, fortitude, chastity, reverence. Under the Social System there would be, Owen and his followers held, no room for such virtues, no need for struggle and endurance, for heroism and fruitless self-surrender; but also no wide horizons, no insatiable hope or celestial ardours. To eat and drink and be clothed, and therewithal to be content—such is the Paradise to which he invites us.

“M. Owen appelle cela le système de la Nature : de la Nature, soit ; mais alors d’une Nature polaire, car ce système n’est rien moins que l’engourdissement complet de l’humanité. Non, il n’en est pas ainsi ; non, l’humanité n’est point cette mer immobile et glaciale que ne visite jamais le soleil, mais bien cet océan capricieux et profond qu’animent des brises harmonieuses, et qui réfléchit dans son miroir les teintes changeantes du ciel.”¹

Of the theoretical absurdity of Owen’s view, that man, the creature of circumstances, could himself re-create those circumstances, it is not necessary to say much. Amongst his correspondence are some letters from an enthusiastic Scotchman, who had invented a machine which would supply “almost illimitable motive-power,” without consumption of fuel. His appeal to Owen for assistance hit the mark ; for did not Owen, too, claim to have discovered a source of almost illimitable motive-power in the moral world, which would work its marvels without cost of human effort.

The time has not yet come to measure the effect

¹ Reybaud, *op. cit.*, p. 286.

which Owen produced on his own generation and those which have succeeded. The great educational experiment at New Lanark no doubt had a far-reaching influence for good, not from any reasoned system of education propounded by Owen, for, as already said, he had none; but from the force of his example. As we have seen in a previous chapter, statesmen, reformers and philanthropists journeyed to New Lanark from the ends of the earth, and carried back with them to their own countries the report of what they had seen. It is not necessary to endorse Owen's own claim (for which I can find no evidence) that the system of State education inaugurated in Prussia in the early years of the century was modelled on that of New Lanark. The infant schools founded in London from 1820 onward were admittedly based on that model. And in other quarters the force of his example had without doubt a real influence in spreading more rational ideas on education, though an influence so diffused that we cannot now point to any outstanding instance of it.

Again, at a time when factory operatives were treated with less consideration than slaves, because, as Owen pointed out, the owner had, and the employer had not, a pecuniary interest in the health of those who worked for him, New Lanark was a magnificent demonstration that a manufacturer could afford to treat the instruments of his wealth as human beings, and yet not be appreciably the poorer for his humanity.

New Lanark was, indeed, Owen's greatest object-lesson; and it is, as Reybaud says, a title to fame which the most illustrious of mankind might envy him.



By permission of the sculptor Mr. Albert Toft.

ROBERT OWEN.

From the medallion on the grave.

Again, Owen's views on criminal reform, far in advance of his own time, are being gradually adopted in ours; and something of the change in public opinion on this point must be attributed to Owen's teaching, and especially to his denunciation, in the *Essays on the Formation of Character*, of the treatment meted out to the unhappy offenders whom he had seen in Newgate prison.

But Owen's influence with the educated classes began to wane after 1816, and by the time he returned from America in 1829 he had almost entirely lost his hold on his original audience. Henceforth, in Sargant's words, he no longer appealed to the respectable classes. But in proportion as he lost his influence on the classes, his influence over the masses was constantly increasing. His object-lessons, indeed, were no longer on so large a scale, and no longer conducted with such obvious and immediate success as in his cotton-mills at New Lanark. Nor did he any more than before win his hearers by the exposition of a logical creed. Owen's "system" was, in fact, quite unsystematic. It was not a coherent body of doctrine; it had no true philosophic or economic basis. The scientific creed of Socialism was elaborated by others—Thompson, Gray, Hodgskin, and the rest. Owen's Socialism, like his life, was founded on benevolence. Its solitary economic premiss was that with proper management there was enough and to spare; its artless conclusion—Why then shouldn't we all be happy? There was no serious analysis of the existing mechanism of society; no reconciliation of demand and supply; no joining issue with Malthus; no recognition or refutation of "the

iron law of wages” ; no question even of justice or of natural rights.

A creed so nebulous in its principles, which became precise only when it descended upon puerile and meticulous details in the arrangement of his quadrangular Communities, was not calculated to win, or having won, to retain, a compact body of disciples. Nevertheless, in the great years from 1830 to 1845 Owen exercised an enormous influence on the democratic movements of his day ; though perhaps not one in a hundred of those who came under his spell remained a professed disciple. His reputation—a reputation too little deserved—as a capable man of business ; the fortune which he had amassed so easily and which he held so cheaply ; his extraordinary generosity ; his invincible conviction that all things worked together for good—if only human perversity would not hinder—all these things drew men to him, and inspired even when they failed to persuade. So that though his disciples were constantly deserting his standard to throw themselves into other causes, and though the Societies which owed their foundation to him failed to carry out his ideas and were continually developing on lines inconsistent with his teachings, the results actually achieved, results not foreseen by him, were still largely due to the influence of his character and example.

Thus Lovett, Hetherington, Cleave and other co-operators became Chartists ; thus the British Association for the Promotion of Co-operative Knowledge developed into the National Union of the Working Classes ; thus the Co-operative Productive Societies of 1830 by a natural evolution became the Trade Unions of 1834.

The effect of Owen's character and teaching remained long after the external bonds of union had been broken. In 1839 a writer, in describing the views of the working classes in this country, after explaining that they ascribe their low wages to competition itself; that they think low wages inevitable so long as a distinction is maintained between labourer and capitalist, proceeds:—"These notions are, in fact, Owenism; and Owenism, as those are aware who habitually watch the progress of opinion, is at present, in one form or another, the actual creed of a great proportion of the working classes. But Owenism does not necessarily, it does not in the mind of its benevolent founder, imply any war against property. What is hoped for is not violently to subvert but quietly to supersede the present arrangements for the employment of capital and labour."¹

And when a few years later the disaster of Queenwood had taught the faithful remnant that the millennium was not yet, and the Owenite tradition seemed for a time hopelessly discredited, even then his spirit found new embodiment in two of the great democratic movements of the latter half of the last century—Secularism and Co-operation.

If we are to sum up Owen's life-work in a sentence, we must claim for him, I think, that he was the arch-heretic—Athanasius almost against the world—to the economic orthodoxy of his day, the gospel according to Ricardo and the men of Manchester. He found his contemporaries obsessed by a nightmare; and if he sought to replace it by a dream, the dream was at least

¹ *London and Westminster Review*, April, 1839. Article on Re-organisation of the Reform Party,

generous and human. There are some who advance step by step, who build by laying stone to stone. There are others who guide their feet by the stars, and dwell in houses not made with hands :

One man with a dream, at pleasure,
Shall go forth and conquer a crown ;
And three with a new song's measure
Shall trample an empire down.

We in the ages lying
In the buried past of the earth,
Built Nineveh with our sighing,
And Babel itself with our mirth ;
And o'erthrew them with prophesying
To the old of the new world's worth ;
For each age is a dream that is dying,
Or one that is coming to birth.

Robert Owen did not rise to the highest. He may seem to have received but a slender portion of the divine fire. Doubtless each age has the prophets whom it deserves. He rose, at any rate, above the level of the men whom he addressed. He saw things which were hidden from their eyes, which are perhaps not fully discovered to ours. And when a later generation shall pronounce impartial judgment upon the men and the forces which worked for righteousness in the nineteenth century, a place will be found for Robert Owen amongst those whose dreams have helped to reshape the world.

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September, 1827.

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1828: 4to.

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Bethany, Va., 1829: 8vo.

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London [1830]: 8vo.

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October, 1830: 8vo.

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1830: 4to.

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Nos. 1-6 (*complete*), 1833.

[The first number was published September 7, 1833.]

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(Parts II. & III., 1842; IV.-VII., 1844.)

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Synopsis of a Course of Four Lectures [to be delivered at Sunderland] . . . explanatory of the Errors and Evils of . . . Society, etc.

[4 pp.], *Birmingham*, 1838: 8vo.

The Catechism of the New Moral World.

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Social Tracts, published by the National Community Friendly Society (undated, about 1838).

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- No. 7. Outline of the Rational System of Society, founded on demonstrable facts, developing the Constitution and Laws of Human Nature.

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The Marriage System of the New Moral World : with a Faint Outline of the present very Irrational System, as developed in a Course of Ten Lectures.

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Report of the Discussion between Robert Owen, Esq., and the Rev. Wm. Legg, B A., which took place in the Town Hall, Reading, March 5 and 6, 1839, on Mr. Owen's New Views of Society.

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1841 : 4to.

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Lectures on the Rational System of Society, derived solely from Nature and Experience, as propounded by Robert Owen, *versus* Socialism, derived from Misrepresentation, as explained by the Lord Bishop of Exeter and others; and *versus* the Present System of Society.
1841: 8vo.

A Lecture delivered in the Mechanics' Institute, London, on March 30, 1840, by Robert Owen, in reply to the errors and misrepresentations made on the subject of the Rational System of Society, in both Houses of Parliament, by the London City Mission, by a large portion of the daily and weekly press, and in the sermons and lectures delivered and published by the clergy and ministers throughout the kingdom. Second Edition.—*Home Colonisation Society. London, 1841: 8vo.*

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